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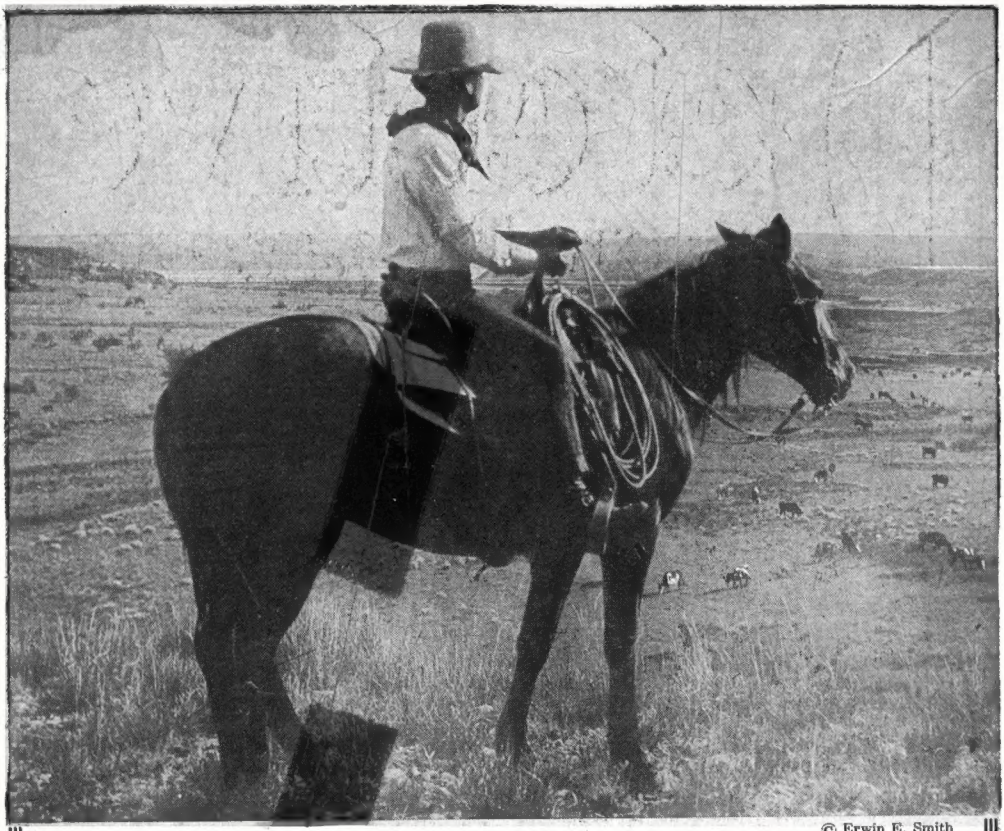

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DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE

EVERY WEEK

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EVERY WEEK

Vol. LXXXII March 20, 1926 No. 4

WARNING! Imitation may be the sincerest form of flattery, but we feel sorry for the reader who buys an imitation. Do not be deceived; insist upon having the original DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

THE MOVING ROOM

By John Jay Chichester

Author of "The Tear Trap," etc.

CHAPTER I.

LOVELY CORRINE.

IN a street of blithe and picturesque poverty such as can belong only to those gayly philosophical bohemian souls in Greenwich Village, the room was an incongruity.

It was a luxurious room. None but the deft hand of the master craftsman could have blended so many warm colors into a chromatic symphony without striking a note of discord. Yes, the interior decorator who had converted Corrine's apartment into its present harmonious splendor had been an artist.

A beautiful room and a beautiful woman! Corrine's beauty, like that of her salon, was rich, warm, just a bit startling, almost bold. Her skin had the softness of rose petals and the creamy pinkness which belongs to apple blossoms. But perhaps it was her eyes which intrigued people most, particularly men; they seemed to wear a veil which obscured even their color and offered, constantly, a half-mystic challenge.

There was an open hearth with a pair of brass andirons suspporting three blazing logs. Corrine Drummond reclined at half length upon a chaise longue. The firelight's soft, restless flames caressed her pretty face, traced phantom patterns over her dinner gown, now and then played across the shapely ankles escaping from beneath the skirt. She had never been more alluring.

The same firelight danced through the shadows to the face of the man who sat in the chair. Corrine watched him with an almost breathless intensity, knowing from the troubled expression, the tight clip of his lips, the insubordinate smolder of his eyes, the clench of his hands, that he had come to an emotional crisis.

Corrine's heart pounded so hard that it seemed on the point of bursting. He was fighting not to tell her what she had already known, days and weeks ago. Of course he *would* fight it back. That was the voice of his traditions, Southern ancestry transplanted to the Middle West where the rigors of the pioneering sixties tempered men's morals as well as their muscles to greater firmness, whispering to him that he must be "honorable."

Baird Morrow was about thirty, a big, boyish fellow, with a smile lurking in his eyes. But it wasn't to be seen now, for his face wore an expression of distressed gravity which, however, detracted nothing from his handsomeness. It was, thought Corrine, only his bigness, his masculine virility, that saved him from the criticism of being "too handsome."

Even to look at him electrified her. Men, as a rule, merely furnished her with a kind of contemptuous amusement, but Baird Morrow had kindled a fire which leaped into a quick, hot flame, burning all the more fiercely because she had kept it concealed. Pent-up emotions are nearly always like that.

It was not long after Baird's coming to New York that Corrine saw him in one of those queer basement tea rooms of the Village where one descends a steep flight of stone steps and finds an almost cavern darkness lighted only by candles. He was seated by one of those dark stalls by the wall. She might have missed seeing him altogether had he not drawn a candlestick across the bare boards of the table to light his cigarette. Suddenly, his face had leaped from out of the shadows.

There had been a woman with Baird Morrow that evening—a plain, shy little woman with the stamp of the rural places upon her. Corrine had resented her instantly. This, to be sure, was most unreasonable. Still, it was also unreasonable to have her heart beating so furiously just for looking at a man she had never seen until that moment.

With Corrine Drummond impulses had a way of becoming fixed purposes, and it seldom required any mental debate for her to know what she wanted. When she *did* want anything she used her brains and *got* it.

In Greenwich Village the barriers against informal acquaintanceship are neither high nor strongly built. Therefore, it required no great amount of cleverness on Corrine's part to bring about the desired meeting without it seeming to be of her own manipulation.

That had been ten weeks ago. For Corrine, they had been weeks of wildly rioting emotions. She had felt a delicious ecstasy when his hand so much as

touched her. Then again she had experienced nights of gnawing jealousy when she thought of him as being in the arms of the plain, shy little woman who was his wife.

His wife! Even to think of it made a red mist of hate swim before her eyes. Her clenched hands would beat her pillows in a rage which must have some outlet. Yet, despite the primitive impulse to open her arms to him and lift the veil of self-suppression from her eyes, Corrine was far too wise to make the mistake of giving herself away. Men, she knew, claimed unto themselves the inalienable right of conquest. The first kiss must not be a free gift; it must be taken.

It had been fully five minutes since Baird had spoken. He was staring fixedly at the glinting ball which topped one of the brass andirons, as if it were a crystal ball and he were trying to look into the future.

Corrine reached out her hand and let her fingers rest very lightly across his rigid knuckles.

"A cup of tea for your thoughts, Baird," she said. "If they should really be worth it, I might shake you a cocktail." It was said banteringly, of course, but there was an excited catch in her voice that was beyond her to control.

Baird Morrow did not lift his head, but she saw his lips twitch and tighten as though steeling himself for words that must be said. She felt his hand tremble beneath her own.

"Corry," he said huskily, "I've been trying to put it off, although I've known it had to come sooner or later. I—I've got no right to be here; I've not had the right for weeks. I shan't come any more—after to-night."

Mentally Corrine smiled tenderly. She had rather expected he would begin it like that. Baird and that consicence of his! Determined to be an honorable man and a gentleman! She loved him the more for making the struggle, but —conscience must not win. Suppose it *did* win? And thus the frightened look, which leaped into her eyes through their tantalizing veil of obscurity, was wholly sincere.

"Baird! Not come any more to see me? Why—why, what do you mean?"

"Either you're stone blind, Corry, or I'm a hundred times better at concealing my feelings than I had thought. Or, perhaps, you're just so noble-minded that it's never occurred to you that our friendship, this fine, beautiful friendship of ours—yes, that's it, Corry; you never thought that I——"

"Baird!" she whispered. "Baird!"

"God knows I've tried, Corry," he went on thickly; "tried not to spoil it all, but there are, I suppose, things that happen inside a man he can't help, no matter how hard he tried."

The bars were down and he was saying precisely what he had determined he must not and would not say.

"You must know what I mean now, Corry; I am madly, hopelessly in love with you. I thought I could content myself with just friendship. It's not enough, and so I have no right to come here again. Some day I should forget myself—and then you would hate me. I'm going now, Corry, and, much as it hurts, I shall not come back again."

He said he was going, but he made no move. Corrine leaned closer to him.

"Hate you?" she said softly. "Hate you, Baird? Oh, dear, foolish boy, it's you who are stone blind. A woman never hates a man for being in love with her, particularly when——" Her voice came to a whispered pause.

Baird Morrow's head lifted with a startled jerk, and he looked into her eyes, now the wide-open windows of her soul.

"Corry!" he cried hoarsely. "Corry!"

Then he took her in his arms, crushed her to him. How she had waited for

this! How strong he was. She had known he would be. His mouth sought her cheeks, her forehead, her throat, her lips. She thought she would lose consciousness.

"Corry!" he kept saying. "Corry!" For the moment it was the only word he uttered.

Suddenly there came an intrusion. The click of a key in the lock of the street door was heard. Baird released her and she staggered back, dizzy and weak. He stood looking at her, and then he brushed his hand across his eyes as though it all were a dream.

"It's Gail," Corrine told him, the words shaking a little. "Don't—don't look so guilty, Baird."

Gail Hunter, Corrine's cousin and protégée whom Corrine had brought to New York on a generous impulse which she sometimes regretted, came into the living room with a portfolio of sketches under her arm. She was an art student and Corrine was financing the experiment.

Gail was quite young, eighteen or nineteen, not very pretty, and, one would have thought, not very happy. There was, however, a transforming animation in her face until she paused in the doorway and saw Baird Morrow standing in front of the hearth. The fire placing him in a ruddy spotlight, revealed his tenseness, his internal agony.

"You're just in time to make the tea, my dear," said Corrine; "it's the maid's day out, you know."

"Very well, Corrine," Gail responded. Removing her coat as she went, she disappeared into the rear of the apartment. The door closed behind her.

Baird lowered himself into the chair and struck his clenched hands against the carved arms.

"Corry, what have we done?" he burst out in a hoarse whisper. "What have we done?"

Corrine leaned nearer to him, caught his hands in both of hers and pressed his rigid knuckles against her cheek.

"Nothing to feel so wicked about, Baird dear," she answered gently. "We love each other. I can no more help loving you than you can help loving me, and I am glad—glad!"

"But I hadn't the right, Corry, to take you in my arms like that. It's all so hopeless; I forgot——" He did not finish; there was no need. She knew the unspoken words—his wife. Reddish specks swam before her eyes, an overwhelming feeling of jealousy and hate arose in her.

There fell a moment or two of silence, their hands clinging.

"I can't give you up, Corry!" he exclaimed. "You are mine, mine, but I can't have you."

"There have been situations like ours before, Baird; there will always be situations like ours. It need not be so utterly hopeless for us—if you love me enough."

He was not quite certain what she meant. Did she mean—— No, it was impossible that she could mean that.

"Do—do you think she *would* give you—your freedom, Baird?"

Divorce! He hadn't thought of that; he hadn't been able to think of anything, wasn't able to now with any clarity. Somehow Thelma, his wife, had become shadowy, unreal in the background of his mind, but now she leaped forward, standing squarely between him and Corry.

"I—I don't know just how she *will* take it, Corry," he heard himself saying. "She is the old-fashioned kind, and—well, I just don't know." Corrine realized, with a fresh pang of jealousy, that the rift between Baird and his wife was by no means so wide as she had believed. He scarcely ever mentioned her, although he had said, at the beginning of his visits, that she did not understand him, that she was not in sympathy with his literary work.

"She must, Baird, she must!" Corrine cried. "She has no right to rob us of our happiness. Surely she will not try to hold you when she knows that——"

There was a ring of the bell, a rude series of janglings as the impudent finger of some caller pressed the button outside in the vestibule. Baird Morrow was both indignant and relieved by the interruption. He resented the intrusion of Corrine's friends, wanting her all to himself. Yet he welcomed a chance to escape, to let his brain cool so that he might face the situation with the calm judgment which it required.

It was always open house at Corrine's, for she had gathered about her a circle of friends. Many of them had become dependents in some way or another so that in a modest sort of way she became a patroness.

Corrine's life had been a dramatic page of human history. She had not always been able to pay large prices to interior decorators, to hand out ten and twenty-dollar bills.

She had come to New York from a Middle West town, full of aspirations for the stage. Her aim had been the drama, but the best she had been able to do was the second row of a second-rate musical show.

The venture, as so many such ventures have, had "an angel," a financial backer who, in this instance, was putting up the money without any reasonable hope of getting more than the pleasure of starring a young woman on Broadway.

One night the "angel," fat, fifty, bald, a trifle asthmatic, had come back stage with a friend who was merely portly, only forty-six and had retained his hair.

"That's Herb Drummond, and he's got bales of dough—millions!" the stage manager told Corrine at the end of the third act. "He's taken a shine to you, kid. A real heavy-sugar papa, girlie; grab him and grab him quick!"

But ten weeks in musical comedy had given Corrine much wisdom, and she did not want a heavy-sugar papa. She was, however, not so reluctant over the idea of a rich husband, for her dreams of theatrical fame had begun to fade. Charming as she might be, she had practically no stage personality, without which dramatic success is impossible and beauty impotent.

A few brief weeks later, Corrine became Mrs. Herbert Haskins Drummond. Her pictures got in the newspapers. For her wedding trip she went to the Riviera; upon her return, she lived in a beautiful house on Madison Avenue. However, she loathed Drummond, for he was a beast when drunk, and was seldom sober.

She endured him for three years before she went to a lawyer about a divorce and alimony. The arrangements had been under way when her husband most considerately walked in the path of a taxicab, and did not live long enough to change his will which, in all probability, he might have done.

Herb Drummond's inherited wealth, grossly exaggerated to begin with, had run swiftly through the sieve of extravagance. There was just enough left from the sale of the Madison Avenue house and its contents to establish a trust fund which gave Corrine an income of some five hundred a month and a cash reserve of about ten thousand.

Greenwich Village had drawn her with its magnet of quaintness, and she had moved into her present quarters, which had once been a grand old house, with enormous rooms and many fireplaces. Most of the furnishings had come from the Madison Avenue house.

Baird Morrow knew nothing about Corrine's past. Perhaps it would have made no difference to his feeling toward her.

Gail Hunter answered the ring of the doorbell. The callers were little Nadine

West, who painted those impressionistic pictures that have to be explained, and Karl Knapp, who wrote impressionistic poetry; moreover, he advertised himself by almost daily strolls down Fifth Avenue, hatless and coatless in all sorts of weather, and subsisted mostly on the largess of his friends.

They immediately and loudly urged cocktails, and Karl Knapp, a great pet with the ladies, promptly established himself beside Corrine and playfully held her hand. There was no seriousness in it, but Baird was on the verge of making a fool of himself. What right had any other man to so much as touch her? Glowering, he mumbled something about "having an engagement."

Corrine followed him out into the vestibule, clung to him for a moment in a parting embrace that was all too brief.

"Come back soon, dear," she whispered tensely; "I think I have a plan for us, if—if she should be—unreasonable."

His senses again dulled by the intoxication of her soft arms and warm lips, Baird stumbled down the steps into the darkness of the narrow, shabby street. The night air, unusually chill for so late in the spring, drenched him like a cold-water plunge, but it only partially cooled the hot fever of his blood.

"I wonder how she is going to take it," he said aloud. He was thinking of Thelma, his wife, and there was a sudden stricture in his throat.

Nadine West and Karl Knapp stayed for the better part of an hour, consumed three cocktails each, and took no notice of Corrine's dreamy abstraction. Upon taking leave, Karl asked the loan of ten dollars as if it were an afterthought rather than the real purpose of his call.

When they had gone, Corrine sat on the chaise longue, cupped her pretty face between her shapely hands, staring pensively into the fire which had burned down to glowing embers. Gail Hunter came in, having disposed of the tea things, the cocktail glasses and shaker, and occupied the chair with the carved arms. There was a considerable silence.

"Well, you've got him," Gail said presently. "You always get what you want when you want it badly enough—don't you?"

It was spoken quietly enough, but Corrine sensed a censorious note in the voice of her young cousin. Immediately she became aggressive, resentful, and at the same time defensive.

"How dare you criticize me, Gail? Is it my fault that he married the wrong woman, a woman who gives him no love, no sympathy—nothing? No, and it wasn't Baird's fault either. He was only a boy when he married her; he didn't realize what it meant. Haven't I a right to happiness? Hasn't Baird a right to happiness?"

"What about her?" murmured Gail. "Hasn't she, too, a right to happiness? It's easy to forget about her, isn't it?"

"How—how dare you make an argument for that—that woman?" Corrine burst out in a sudden fury. "She doesn't love him, he doesn't love her, and——"

"Oh, but she *does* love him, Corrine," Gail broke in firmly; "she worships him. I saw them in a restaurant together only a few days ago. Anybody could see that she fairly worships him. And as for him—well, a man's love often has its vagrant moods, I suppose. It goes wandering every now and then with very little inducement, but it will go back home if left alone.

"She's not at all clever. She's just one of those plain, loyal, homy little women. She would be somewhat pretty, in her quiet, shy way if she had a chance to fix herself up. I guess it's not *her* fault that she's shabby; Baird has no money to give her, of course.

"She hasn't your beauty, she hasn't your cleverness, and she hasn't the

background of an apartment like this to——"

"Stop it!" exclaimed Corrine.

"And so," went on Gail Hunter who had a wisely philosophical young head on her shoulders, "you've taken an unfair advantage of her. You've made Baird think he's a genius, and perhaps his wife tries to tell him the truth, that he writes very, very badly and that he's chasing a rainbow."

"This is your gratitude!" Corrine cried bitterly. "After all I've done for you, trying to give you a career, you accuse me of—of *stealing* Baird away from his wife."

"It amounts to that," Gail agreed. "You're not playing fair and that's cheating. Life doesn't let one cheat and get away with it. Somehow I can't help being honest with you about this, Corrine, although it's probably doing not the least bit of good, only making you angry with me. But I've *got* to say it.

"I *am* grateful to you for what you're doing for me—giving me this big opportunity. To-night I am particularly grateful, for Wetzel looked over some of my drawings at the school exhibit to-day and he said I had talent, real talent. He said that if I would put in another two years——"

"So that's why you are doing all of this—this moralizing!" Corrine exclaimed scornfully. "You're afraid that when Baird and I are married I will send you packing home. I've got a good notion to do it right now for all these horrid things you're saying to me!" She was on the verge of tears.

"Oh, but you know better than that, Corrine," Gail returned earnestly. "I think you know, too, I am very, very fond of you; I couldn't help being fond of you if I tried.

"You talk about happiness, but oh, don't do it, Corrine; don't do it!" Her voice dropped to a tense whisper. "There'll be nothing but misery and tragedy. I feel it; I know it! Sometimes I feel that I am almost occult; I have a way of feeling impending dangers and there is tragedy ahead for you, Corrine, awful tragedy——"

"Stop it!" gasped out Corrine with a shudder. "In Heaven's name, stop it; you frighten me!"

"I wish I could frighten you enough."

CHAPTER II.

A WIFE'S PREDICAMENT.

TRIVIALITIES may decide matters of great importance; in moments of crisis the right or wrong word may swing the balance one way or the other. Thelma Morrow was harassed to her wits' end by the problem of her husband's ambitions. Still, it never occurred to her to doubt the constancy of his affections; she had not the slightest idea that there was a crisis.

It was the next morning. The Morrows had quarters on the top floor of a decaying old building, three ill-lighted rooms, reached by four flights of dusty stairs. The only thing to be said in their favor was that the rent was extremely reasonable. Baird Morrow had come to New York with a capital of barely a thousand dollars. It was all he had been able to get from the sale of the home-town newspaper, left him by his father, after the mortgage on it was paid. A thoroughly modern apartment uptown could have been rented for the same money, but Baird had a preconceived notion that there was some literary magic in the atmosphere of Greenwich Village. Therefore he would consider nothing else.

Thelma Morrow stood at the window, staring across toward the grim rise of the Jefferson Market prison. The sight of it always held her in the grip of a transfixed horror. Frequently she could see a face, a woman's face, looking out through the bars.

What a horrible place a prison must

be! She tried to picture what it was like. Then she would turn back to her own shabby rooms, the ugly walls, the meager furniture, nauseated by the mingled odors of decaying wood and leaking gas, depressed by the hopeless dismality.

This, too, was a prison, and the place across the street, surely, could be no worse. Patient as she was, Thelma Morrow was on the verge of open revolt. The sacrifice of living like this seemed so utterly useless.

And how homesick she was! How she yearned for the sight of the old, friendly, familiar faces, for the lazy, peaceful quiet of the little country town, for the gorgeous sunsets across Tupper's Lake, for the voice of the tree locusts as twilight came.

Baird was late abed this morning. All night he had kept her awake with his restless tossing, although, when she spoke to him, he seemed to be asleep. She wondered if he were coming to the realization, as he eventually must, that he was pursuing a will-o'-the-whisp—to the admission of the failure of his dreams. How could she know he was trying to decide between her and another woman? She did not even know the other woman existed.

Now there was the sound of Baird stirring in the room beyond. A few minutes later he appeared in the doorway, his face drawn and haggard, his mind no nearer a decision than it had been the night before.

"Good morning, dear," said Thelma, looking at him anxiously and trying to cheer him up with a smile. "Breakfast's been ready for ages, but I didn't call you. Sit down and I'll bring in the coffee and toast. Poor boy, you look so terribly worried and depressed; is it anything——"

"Nothing," Baird Morrow broke in hastily, "headache, that's all." He watched as she disappeared in the tiny kitchen at the rear. She left the door open and he could see her at the gas stove, putting a little more fire under the coffee so that it would be steaming hot. She knew he detested lukewarm coffee. Thelma was always extremely thoughtful about small things like that.

"It's not Thel's fault," he said under his breath. "Heaven knows it's not her fault. She means well enough, and I suppose she *thinks* she loves me; she's the kind that would go on and on——"

He pictured the horror in her face if he told her that he wanted a divorce. Divorce! What a monstrous thing he had been taught to believe it was. It was not a nice thing to hurt a woman so terribly.

But there was Corrine. He had taken her in his arms! Baird was young, even younger than his years, and an idealist; he felt a kind of reverence about a woman's kisses. Didn't that place him under a certain obligation of honor to Corrine? He liked to believe it did, making his obligation to his wife apparently weigh less heavily in the swaying balance.

Thelma brought in the coffee and toast, and was punching a hole in the tin of a fresh can of condensed milk when the doorbell sounded with a weak whir.

"That must be the postman," he observed absently. "It's about time I heard from that last story, and——"

"Go ahead with your breakfast, dear," she broke in; "maybe a letter from the folks." She hoped it wasn't another of Baird's returned manuscripts; he felt badly enough already. If it was, Thelma decided with quick thoughtfulness, she would hide the envelope in her waist and delay another of these disappointments.

There were two envelopes in the Morrow letter box when she raced down the stairs to the ground floor. One of them was bulky which was probably another rejected story. The other bore the post mark of Twin Springs

and was addressed in the handwriting of Thelma's sister back home. She tore open the flap and read as she went upstairs. Her face began to lose color and a look of fearful panic widened her eyes.

"Baird!" she gasped out, bursting in on him. "Oh, Baird!" And she fell across the table, the letter clutched in her hand and gave way to uncontrollable sobbing.

"It—it's mother," she told him in a choked voice. "She——"

"Not dead?" he cried, leaping to his feet and going around the table to her. She winced at the dread word he had used.

"She—she's had a stroke, Baird; she is very ill. She—may be taken from me any moment. Oh, mother, poor, sweet mother!"

Baird patted her convulsing shoulders. Thelma seldom wept, but her tears always stirred him. Her grief drew him back to her on a sudden, surging wave of sympathy.

"There, there, honey." He was surprised at the sound of his own voice. "It can't be so bad as all that or the news wouldn't have come in a letter. It is a letter, isn't it? I thought at first it was a telegram. What does it say? Let me have it."

Her fingers surrendered the crumpled sheets of paper, and he read the hastily written pencil scrawl of Myrtle, Thelma's sister.

"Why, it's not so bad, honey," he told her. "She was much better when this was written and she says that she will let you know by wire if there is any change for the worse."

"But I know Myrtle," Thelma said with a gulp; "she always holds back bad news. She wouldn't want to worry me too much, and I can tell by the way she writes—Oh! Baird, I've got to go home; I've got to go to her right away—to-day."

"All right," he agreed slowly and, it seemed to her, grudgingly. "If you feel that you've *got* to."

"W-why, Baird, don't you *want* me to go?"

"The railroad fare is fifty dollars," he reminded her, "and I've only got about three hundred left. I'm trying to be sensible, that's all. Myrtle says there is no immediate danger and with every dollar counting——"

"Baird, you couldn't, you wouldn't be so cruel as to deny me—if mother should die without my seeing her, I could never forgive you. Never! It would almost make me hate you." Strong emotions bring forth strong words. Under other circumstances she would not have said what she was saying now. But his reluctance stabbed her cruelly and there is, in all of us, the primitive instinct to give back, wound for wound.

"You—you would deny me this—for what?" she cried hysterically. "For another week or two in New York. To what purpose? None, absolutely none! It's time you knew the truth I've wanted to tell you a hundred times, a thousand times, but I didn't want to hurt you, and I've felt you wouldn't believe the truth until you'd found it out for yourself."

Baird grew tense, and his eyes hardened with antagonism.

"Just what do you mean by that?" he demanded.

Perhaps in all their almost ten years of married life, Thelma Morrow had never let herself go like this. The words stormed out of themselves with an accumulation of bitterness behind them.

"This—stuff you're writing is just that—stuff. Silly junk, Baird Morrow, and you'll never make a five-cent piece out of it, no matter how many hours you put in doing it. It's all an illusion; you're defrauding yourself. You haven't sold a line of it, you haven't got an encouraging word from a single

editor. You never will—never! I thought you were a fool to come to New York, but when you threatened to come without me——" Her voice came to a terrified pause as she saw the effect of what she was saying. The way he was staring at her—flaming daggers of anger coming from his eyes—it seemed as if he hated her.

No doubt, at least for the moment, he did. There is no injury that hurts more than a blow to a man's conceit, particularly when it is a conceit which he had fabricated into a dream of awaiting greatness and fame.

"This from you—my wife!" he shouted at her. "What I'm writing is 'silly junk,' is it? Wait and see! I'll succeed, do you hear, even if I have to begin with the millstone of your discouragement, your lack of faith hanging around my neck. I'm glad you've had your say, Thelma; yes, I'm glad I know how you feel. I know where I stand now. You're the kind of woman who keeps a man a failure; you——"

"Baird, please don't!" she broke in frantically. "I'm sorry—oh, you don't know how sorry I am that I put it so cruelly. It was mean and spiteful of me, and——"

"You meant every word of it," he said savagely, "you meant every blessed word of it! Don't lie to me. People don't say things like that unless they mean 'em."

"No, I shan't lie to you, Baird. The truth's out now and it will have to stand. It *is* the truth, if you only realized it. Perhaps, after you get over being so angry with me, it will be a good thing for both of us."

"There is no longer the word 'us' between you and me. "You've finished that. Yes, Thelma, you've finished it—once and for all."

That did not disturb her so much. He was merely angry, very angry with her, for, of course, she knew nothing whatever about Corrine Drummond. Baird was on the verge of telling her then and there, blurting out the whole truth, asking her to let him have a divorce. However, something stopped him, just what, he could not have explained. It is not an easy thing, even when rage makes a man reckless, to tell a wife, out of a clear sky, that there is "another woman."

Again Thelma's tears came, but this time they did not stir him.

"Oh, Baird," she pleaded, "let's go back home, both of us—to-day. If there were any hope that it would be worth the sacrifice I'd starve with you for years and years. Look at this awful place. Even the negroes back home don't have to live in such pigpens. Think of the little house we had, with Tupper's Lake and the sunsets. Don't you remember how we used to sit on the porch with my head on your shoulder. Don't you remember how beautiful it was?"

Baird Morrow made no response, and it began to frighten her that he was so unmoved, the expression of his face so unchanged, so terrible.

"You've just said yourself, Baird, there's only three hundred dollars left out of what we had when we came to New York, and that means only a few weeks longer at best. Can't you see how utterly hopeless it is for you to try and stay on? Even if some of your stories *should* sell, there wouldn't be enough to keep us, not for a long, long time anyhow. Please, dear; please! We *must* be sensible."

"I am never going back to Twin Springs," he told her, his voice hard and brittle. "That's clear enough, isn't it?" He swung around and crossed the room to a row of bookshelves. Reaching behind the volumes, he brought forth a small metal box and tossed it to the table.

"There it is," he said gruffly, "and all there is. It's yours, any part or all. Since Tupper's Lake and the sunsets

mean more to you than my career, you'd better go back—alone."

Hardly before she realized what he was doing, he had crushed his hat to his head, banged the door behind him, and he had gone thundering down the bare boards of the stairs. Thelma stood for a moment, bewildered and uncertain; her first impulse was to follow him, to call him back, but she gave up the idea with a vigorous shake of her head.

"Best let him alone until he's cooled off," she told herself with some return to calmness. "Words, just angry words. He'll come back after a little while. I'll ask him to forgive me and he'll ask me to forgive him, and we'll both be sorry and happy. The poor boy; I shouldn't have smashed his dear, foolish dreams so violently." And she began clearing away the remnants of her husband's breakfast.

Baird Morrow did not come back "after a little while." The day had spent itself late into the afternoon before he returned, and by no means in the settled state of mind which belongs to the man who has reached a final and irrevocable decision.

The early twilight had filled the dingy room with deep shadows. Not a light was burning. That was strange, very strange, for there was something about the city nights which struck terror in Thelma's heart. No, it was not at all like her to be alone in this gathering blackness. Gripped by a feeling of anxiety, he paused in the doorway. Perhaps she had fallen asleep.

"Thel!" he called, and then, more loudly, "Hello there, Thel!"

There was no answer, and, with an increasing feeling of alarm, he sniffed at the stale air of the rooms. It was always laden with the smell of gas escaping from leaky pipes, but it seemed stronger than usual. Was it possible he had driven her to self-destruction? That she might have gone, did not occur to him.

Baird's fingers groped to his pocket for a card of matches. His hands were in a palsy as he lighted the flickering, spewing gas jet on the wall.

On the battered table, held down by the edge of a book, were three sheets of his typewriter paper, partly covered by a smaller sheet of yellow—a telegram.

The telegram was from Twin Springs, signed with the name of Thelma's sister. It said:

Mother much worse. Advise you to come at once.

And then the note Thelma had written. Baird sat down and began to read.

BAIRD, DEAREST: As I write this I am waiting for the sound of your feet on the stairs. You must be very angry with me, even angrier than I had thought, to be gone so long.

This telegram came less than an hour after you left me with those terrible words you didn't really mean, that you *couldn't* mean. I've got to go, Baird, and unless you are back in time for me to get down to the station by two o'clock, I shall have to go without you. If I should miss the two o'clock train, I would lose a whole day.

I am taking sixty dollars of the money. You must follow me on the first train. You must, and I know you will.

Baird, darling, I have a plan. When you have got over being so angry, you will realize how foolish it is to stay in New York any longer. Myrtle and I will come into the farm. It's four hundred acres, you remember, and my half will be easily twenty thousand. I will borrow enough from the bank to buy back the Twin Springs paper for you——

It was a very long letter, for Thelma had written and written, with one eye on the clock. It came, finally, to a hurried close, too hurried, perhaps, for her to pour out, in a last, parting flood, the full depth of her apparently placid love for him.

Baird Morrow crushed the sheets of paper between his fingers.

"She's gone," he said aloud; "this

makes it easier on both of us. The situation has solved itself. I'll write her a letter and explain. I'll write her a letter to-night, the flat truth. I'll be as decent about it as I can."

But, unaccountably, he was swallowed up by a feeling of great and desolate emptiness which, for quite some time, even his thoughts of Corrine could not wholly dispel.

CHAPTER III.

CORRINE'S PLAN.

CORRINE had read in the newspapers that at El Progreso, capital of the Socialistic State, Mexican Yucatan, was to be obtained what is probably the easiest and quickest divorce in the world. One merely established a week's residence, paid an insignificant sum of money to a lawyer, and stated that he or she no longer desired to remain married. The decree was granted without any further question.

It seemed to Corrine that this state of affairs had been arranged for her special benefit. Only a few weeks would elapse before Baird would return with his freedom, and they could be married. Any other arrangement would have meant long months of waiting with the added possibility that Baird's wife would oppose the action, perhaps defeat it.

As for Baird, every hour he spent with Corrine made him more subject to her will, and she quickly rode down his objections. Particularly did he resent that it must be necessary for her to furnish the money. But she assured him he might return it when his writings began to bring him an income.

"Some of these days," she told him, more than half believing it herself, "you are going to be very famous and perhaps very rich. Your books will be selling into the hundreds of thousands."

Consulting the consul from El Progreso, Baird and Corrine discovered that one preliminary formality was necessary. The divorce litigant must be armed with the proof that the marriage, which was about to be so speedily and unquestionably dissolved, had actually taken place. Therefore, Baird had to write to the county seat back home for a certified copy of the record. This delayed him a week before he could start for New Orleans. It was his plan to take the boat from there across the Gulf to Yucatan.

It was not until the very day of his departure that he finally steeled himself to write to Thelma. There was, also, a certain amount of caution in this procrastination. He was more than half afraid that she would come flying back to New York. Yes, there was a possibility of her doing just that, for something told him, with a voice of warning, Thelma would not take it at all calmly. At least, Baird assured himself, she would not be able to make any trouble for Corrine, for he had been very careful in the letter to give no intimation of Corrine's identity.

Less than forty-eight hours after she had seen Baird off on the train, Corrine was seized with a gnawing restlessness The apartment, when he was no longer there, became suddenly like a prison to her. Karl Knapp dropped in, but Karl's wit, his seemingly inexhaustible stock of epigrams only irritated her, and when she had got rid of him, she and Gail were alone together.

Gail herself was not very good company to-day. She had a letter from Donald, her brother, threatening to "try his luck" in New York. Knowing Donald as she did, it was really a threat. He was two years older than Gail, but reckless, unstable and none too well equipped with scruples. No, New York was not the place for Donald; no city was.

She had already answered the letter, discouraging the idea in no uncertain terms. It might have the desired effect

and, again, it might not. There was never any telling what Donald's reactions might be. Corrine sat staring at the slender spiral of smoke which curled up from the cigarette burning itself out between her slim fingers.

"How I miss him!" she exclaimed. "You can't imagine how much, Gail." She wanted to talk about Baird as all women like to talk about the man they are in love with.

Gail stirred, smiling faintly.

"You needn't have bothered about sending him 'way off down South, you know."

"Needn't have bothered? Don't you understand *why* he's gone? Surely I explained——"

"To get a divorce that isn't worth the paper it's written on—not in this country. A Yucatan divorce hasn't any standing in the United States."

"I don't believe a word of it; a divorce is a divorce."

"A sop to convention, that's all. You'll be no more legally married to him then if—but what's the use? I don't suppose you care, so long as you get him without tossing your morals overboard entirely——"

"Gail Hunter, don't you *dare* say such things to me!"

Gail shrugged her shoulders and pursued the subject no further. Corrine let the cigarette burn itself out, tossed it into the ash tray and leaped to her feet.

"I can't stand it, just sitting here, waiting and thinking!" she cried. "I've got to get out—do something."

Gail looked toward the windows. Outside was the warming sunshine of a tardy spring that should already have been mellowing into the first lazy days of summer.

"I don't suppose you'd care for a motor trip out into the country?" she suggested hopefully.

"The very thing!" Corrine agreed with her quick, impulsive enthusiasm. "I'll call up the garage to send a man around with the roadster, and you pack a bag. We'll come back Monday morning."

How the Master Dramatist does seize upon trivial incidents to turn them into real situations of tense, vital importance!

Approaching darkness found Corrine and Gail more than a hundred miles from New York. They were almost at the end of Long Island which extends its long and stalwart finger of land out into the Atlantic Ocean and separates the Connecticut shore from the open sea.

Corrine's roadster had been in dead storage during the winter, and this was the first time she had driven it in months. The motor had run smoothly enough for the first seventy miles or so and then it began to give warning of trouble in a series of intermittent sputterings which told of faulty ignition. While the trip had no definite objective, they surely would not have selected the village of Gallup Beach, with its little handful of houses, its three stores and garage, as a place to put up for the night. But motor trouble is likely to maroon one anywhere.

"Seems sorter like to me," said the garage helper uncertainly, "the spark coil has burned out on yer. I wouldn't be able to do nothin' 'bout it until the boss gets back to-morrow mornin'. Y'see I ain't a reg'lar mechanic; jest startin' in to learn the trade."

"Well, this *is* rotten luck!" Corrine exclaimed. "Isn't there something you could do to make it run at least to Southampton?"

"Feared there ain't, ma'am."

"Is there a good hotel here?" Gail inquired. "We've got to make the best of it, Corry, and I don't mind at all. It's kind of a lark if you look at it that way."

"There ain't even a bad hotel in this town," said the garage helper,

snickering at his own wit; "there ain't *no* hotel."

"This may be your idea of a lark," snapper up Corrine to her cousin, "but to me it's a disaster. No hotel. My stars, Gail, what are we going to do?"

"Oh, it's really not so bad, Corry; this young man may not know how to fix a car but I am quite sure he must know how to drive one. Maybe there is one about that he can use in taking us to Southampton. We'll stay there overnight and come back to-morrow morning." She turned to the grimy youth. "You could do that?"

"Yes'm, I suppose I could, but it'll cost you four bucks."

The bargain was made. The garage helper cranked an ancient flivver which lacked a self-starter, and Corrine and Gail arranged themselves in the rear seat. In a little while they reached a hotel.

Next morning, along about ten o'clock, they returned to Gallup Beach only to be informed by the garage proprietor that his helper's decision had been correct. A new spark coil was needed. Unfortunately, he had none in stock, and it would be at least two o'clock in the afternoon before the repairs could be made.

Gallup Beach in the daylight seemed to be a place of quaint individuality and charm. Gail particularly was impressed, for she always looked at things through the artist's eyes.

"Why, Corry, what delightful old houses!" she exclaimed. "I must see more of them. We've a full four hours —perhaps longer; these garage people so seldom keep their promises. Shall we take a walk? Please do, Corry."

"I don't mind," Corrine answered; "there's nothing else we can do, I suppose. It does seem to be an interesting sort of place at that, quite unusual."

It was a wonderful day for a walk; the crisp air, with the tang of the sea in it, tingled one's lungs and made one's eyes sparkle. The trees, mostly pines, went down to the shore, almost meeting the waters of the bay.

"I wonder why they call it Gallup Beach," said Gail; things like that interested her.

"It certainly hasn't kept the brisk pace of modern times," Corrine answered with a laugh. "Nothing seems to have changed, not in years and years. An old-time fishing village, of course, but I suppose fishing has become a highly commercialized industry like everything else."

"Beautiful, beautiful!" exclaimed Gail. "I am coming back here some time and do some sketches. I wonder if there are any furnished cottages for rent."

They wandered up one street and down another. Presently, the only remaining avenue of exploration lay ahead along the road which followed the curving shoreline of the bay. The cottages became more widely separated, then dropped behind entirely.

"I think we might as well go back," suggested Corrine.

"Oh, let's go on," urged Gail. How was she to know what lay ahead? She was only thinking that the view was one of the most perfect she had ever seen, that the beauty seemed to grow with every forward step. Scenery like this always had the effect of making her a little drunk.

"Not much farther," Corrine warned, a bit wearily; "I'm wearing a new pair of shoes."

The road twisted sharply, rose steeply up the incline of a considerable hill and brought them, with startling suddenness, within sight of an old house.

A strange looking house it was, too, with a style of architecture all its own. It was very, very old and, despite its obvious neglect, retained a most substantial appearance. There was a tower, facing the bay, which made one think of a ship's forecastle, and doubtless that

had been the intent. One knew, even before seeing the very ancient ship's capstan that was almost concealed by a growth of weeds, that the house had been built by some seafaring man.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Gail Hunter, coming to an abrupt, startled pause. "What a queer house." And, for some reason that she made no attempt to analyze, she shuddered.

All houses have personality. Some are merely drab and uninteresting like dull and colorless people, and you pass them by without a second glance. Some are genial and warming; still, others repel and yet fascinate. The effect is not always the same on all minds. One man's friend is another's enemy.

Corrine's reaction to it was a sort of enchantment.

"Gail!" she gasped out in a whisper, almost of awe. "That house! It—it is——"

"No matter what superlative you use, it most certainly is."

"It is like a place in a dream!"

"After one has eaten large amounts of indigestible food just before going to bed," said Gail. "It's a nightmare!"

"Gail, how *can* you say such a thing! Wouldn't you like to see the view from that darling tower?"

"I would not!" exclaimed the other with a shiver of dislike. "One couldn't if one wanted to anyhow. The house is boarded up—and no wonder! Who would want to live in such a frightful old place?"

"Well, I would, and I don't understand how you can call it frightful." With an almost rapt expression Corrine moved forward, and Gail reluctantly trailed along, filled with a vague but none the less disturbing sense of foreboding. She couldn't explain it and made no effort to.

A lone tree, of a genus not native to the North American continent, stood sentinellike about midway of the shore road and the house which stood back some twenty or thirty yards. Near it was the ancient ship's capstan.

"Corry! You're not going in?"

"Certainly I'm going in," Corrine answered. "The windows at the back may not be boarded and perhaps we can get a peek inside. And if we *should* happen to find a window unlocked——"

Her voice came to an abrupt pause. She had come to the strange tree, and her attention had been diverted to the inconspicuous sign fastened there. It was such an absurdly small sign that it could scarcely have attracted notice from the road. Certainly, it could not have been read at such a distance, even before the lettering had been weather-beaten to an almost indecipherable dimness.

THIS PLACE FOR SALE

House and Twelve Acres With Shore Frontage of Five Hundred Feet. House Fully Furnished. For Sale at a Bargain.

Apply to ABNER SNEED, Gallup Beach.

"Why, Gail, it's up for sale!" Corrine cried breathlessly.

"Humph!" said Gail, her uneasiness mounting. With her cousin's impulses, and the way these impulses had of becoming fixed purposes, anything might happen. Yes, anything! Only if the price were as high as shore-front property usually is, it would probably be beyond Corrine's reach unless she disturbed her trust fund. This, Gail felt with a hopeful relief, she would never do.

"Abner Sneed, Abner Sneed," said Corrine, repeating the name as if storing it away in her memory for further use. "Now come on, Gail, and let's have a good, close look. Fully furnished, think of that! I shouldn't wonder if it's just full of all sorts of old treasures. Look at that light on the porch."

An old ship's lantern, of brass, swung from one of the porch rafters. The lantern struck a note of incongruity in the general appearance of neglect, for

it gleamed with a burnished luster. It had been freshly polished.

From beneath the porch, at this moment, there sprang toward them, without so much as a growl of warning, an enormous dog. A brute of a dog, uncertain of breed, powerful of body and vicious of temper!

Gail Hunter did not often scream, but she screamed now and, starting to run back, tripped in the high-grown grass, and fell in a quaking huddle. She was certain that the beast would be upon her before she could regain her feet. This would certainly have happened but for the fact that the monstrous dog, enraged by their trespassing, was brought up short at the end of a long chain such as are used to pump water from cisterns. It gave Gail an uncomfortably narrow margin of some eight feet of safety from those ugly bared fangs overset by a pair of yellow eyes.

As the girl scrambled to her feet, the dog strained forward on all fours at the end of the metal leash, snarling wickedly, straining every muscle to be at her. A dog like that could tear one apart! As she ran, she frantically hoped the chain would hold until she had got away.

Corrine, equally frightened, had run halfway back to the road where she paused, gasping for breath.

"What—what a horrible dog! Gail, it almost got you. It was cowardly of me to run and leave you——"

"It was very good sense. If he hadn't been tied, nobody could have saved either one of us. Come on, hurry! That chain looks terribly rusty and weak to me. I guess *this* cures you of curiosity!"

The adventuring pair retreated to the road. Whereupon, the dog became less aggressive but none the less vigilant, continuing to watch them suspiciously and warning them repeatedly with a constant snarling. Corrine paused.

"Some one must live here after all," she said, "the caretaker, no doubt. A fine reception for a prospective purchaser, I must say!"

"No dog behaves like that," declared Gail, "unless it's been *trained,* and no one trains a dog to behave like that unless it's to frighten people away. There's something queer, something frightfully uncanny about this house."

Corrine was paying no attention to what her cousin was saying. The episode of the dog, evidently, had done very little to rob the place of its strange enchantment in her eyes.

"Yes," she repeated, "some one must live here." And she raised her voice in a shrill "You-hoo! You-hoo!" to attract the attention of whoever might be inside, behind those boarded windows.

"Come on, away, Corry, please do!" Gail pleaded, but Corrine ignored her, cupping hands to mouth as she continued calling.

No one appeared, but Gail was sure she could not be mistaken in the impression that one of those solid board shutters, apparently on hinges, had opened a little way. She was sure that a pair of eyes was watching them through this narrow, cautious opening. But there was no response, and the girl shivered again. Corrine gave it up.

"Abner Sneed, Abner Sneed," she said, repeating the name she had read from the sign on the tree, as though she might forget it. Gail knew, of course, what was in her mind.

"Corry!" she protested, almost hysterically. "You're not thinking, you're not actually thinking of buying the place?"

"I might if the price is reasonable enough. It says 'at a bargain,' you know, and it may be ridiculously cheap. Look at that tower. What a wonderful place for Baird to do his writing!" She was quite calm again and she smiled humorously. "Don't worry, my dear, we won't have to take the dog."

Gail was about to burst into vehement

objections when an expression of utmost relief came into her face.

"They may *pretend* they want to sell the place, but they don't," she declared. "That silly little sign that no one could read ten feet away; it's just a sham. There was some one in the house and they wouldn't come out when you called. No, the place isn't really for sale, thank Heaven."

"Well, anyhow," Corrine answered rather tartly, "we'll hear what Abner Sneed has to say about it."

CHAPTER IV.

THE DISCARDED WIFE.

A CAREFUL man was Ben Tully, careful of his money and careful of his speech, and almost as reluctant to let an unnecessary word slip past his lips as he was to permit an unnecessary nickle to slip through his fingers. He might have been considered inarticulate, and yet when he did speak, it was always bluntly and to the point.

Tall and lank, his large hands bulging of knuckles as is usual with those who have known little else but toil, he looked out of character in his stiff, cheap suit of clothes. He was unaccustomed to the starched collar which chaffed his neck. His blunt fingers fumbled at the collar, and he gave a grunt of relief as he got it free. Taking his pipe from the mantel of the imitation fireplace in the parlor of the farmhouse wherein there still clung the scent of too many flowers, he filled it with twist tobacco that he broke off and ground to flaky bits between his leathery palms. He sat down on the horse-hair sofa—the same sofa on which he had courted his wife ten years ago—and puffed slowly.

Myrtle Tully, her eyes red-rimmed from such weeping, stripped off her black cotton mourning gloves, revealing hands that were coarsened by the work of a farmer's wife. Her grief had totally spent itself. Now that she was back from the cemetery, she had become quite calm, and her mind was already beginning to turn upon practical matters. She was beginning to wonder just how she and Thelma would divide their inheritance, their mother's farm. Still it seemed heartless to mention this so soon.

The door of the parlor was open, and in the stillness of the house there came the faint sound of a muffled but uncontrollable sobbing from Thelma. It made Myrtle a little ashamed of herself that Thelma's sorrow should be more poignant than her own.

"I'm goin' to miss ma somethin' terrible," she said to her husband, "but what had to be, jest had to be, and to keep on grievin' and grievin' ain't goin' to bring ma back," she said. Possibly there was a note of defense in her voice. "Ain't that the sensible way to look at it, Ben?"

"Uh-huh," agreed Ben Tully with his customary brevity of speech, puffing slowly at his pipe.

"Thel is carryin' on mighty hard," added Myrtle, "but then I reckon she was always kinder—well, kinder emotional."

Ben removed the pipe from his mouth and cleared his throat as he usually did when he felt moved to extended speech.

"It ain't alone your ma that she's cryin' about," he said. "It's somethin' else pesterin' her mind, fillin' her heart with sorrow."

Myrtle Tully looked puzzled and curious.

"What are you meanin', Ben?"

"Things ain't right with Thel and her husband," Ben declared in his flat, colorless, slightly drawling voice. "That's what ails her, Myrt."

"You mean because Baird didn't come for ma's funeral? She said——"

"Mebbe you been so busy nursin' your ma and then makin' the funeral arrangements that you ain't noticed she ain't had so much as the scratch of a

pen from 'im," Ben interrupted. "She's been here ten days, ain't she? Is that natural, Myrt, if everything was right between 'em?"

"My land!" gasped out Myrtle. "I—I hadn't took no notice. Do you reckon that they're separated?"

"Likely. Ain't natural he shouldn't write her no letter in ten days while her ma is layin' on a deathbed."

"You're sure Baird ain't wrote her, Ben? Why, she told me——"

"Uh-huh. Told me the same thing, but that's jest her pride tryin' to keep it under cover. Wouldn't be surprised he's run off with another woman. All cities is wicked, and I guess the bigger they are the more wickedness there is, so New York's worse'n any of 'em."

Myrtle Tully's eyes were wide and staring with a conflict of emotions. She felt pity for Thelma, indignation against Baird, provincial horror of impending scandal which, perhaps, threatened to sully the name of the family. Moreover, she experienced a feeling of jubilation that her own marriage should have turned out so much better than Thelma's.

The two sisters were not at all alike, either in physical appearance or mental qualities. Both had been born on the farm, and Myrtle, the eldest by almost ten years, had lacked the charm which had brought a good many young fellows out to see Thelma.

Myrtle detested books, had droned her way through the grammar school and refused to bother herself any further about learning. Thelma, on the contrary, had a thirst for knowledge and had even studied French. The two Leffert girls had married about the same time, Thelma at nineteen to the handsome son of the Twin Springs newspaper proprietor, and stolid Myrtle to Ben Tully who worked hard, saved his wages but occupied the dubious social position of being "hired man" on the farm adjoining the Lefferts.

Yes, Myrtle had long entertained a suppressed resentment of her sister's superiority. She envied the neat little cottagt in town with its running water and minimum of drudgery, Thelma's white, unscarred hands, Thelma's name in her father-in-law's newspaper.

Mrs. Baird Morrow entertained the Women's Wednesday Club this week. A dainty luncheon was served.

And now, if what Ben had said turned out to be true, Thelma's advantages were reduced to nothing. Myrtle looked toward her lank, homely husband with a greater feeling of contentment and pride than she had ever felt toward him.

"Mebbe Baird's been took sick or somethin'," she said without any faith in her own suggestion. "Mebbe he's been run down by an automobile and ain't been able to get word to her. I've heard tell of such things."

Ben Tully removed his pipe from his mouth again. Whenever he did speak, it was always with that finality which belongs to the man who knows that what he says is unequivocally true.

"No," he told Myrtle. "Fer Thel's sake I wish it might be. It ain't. She's been runnin' down the lane to the R. F. D. box to fetch up the mail her own self thinkin' to fool us with them stories 'bout gettin' another letter from Baird. There ain't been no letters—not one. I asked the carrier. It's pretty near drivin' her crazy, seems like."

The matter, for the moment, was pursued no further. One of the Robinson girls from the adjoining farm, who had come in to "help out" in that neighborly way of the rural communities, appeared in the doorway of the parlor. Thereupon, the conversation became concerned mainly with "the beautiful sermon" that had been preached at Ma Leffert's funeral.

Ben Tully had, with surprising shrewdness for such a dull-looking fellow, put his finger squarely upon the

truth of Thelma Morrow's acute mental distress. Ten days—and not a line from Baird!

She had been certain that he would reach Twin Springs not more than a day after she arrived. Her first feeling, when the passing of the first twenty-four hours failed to bring him, was one of indignation for his stubbornness. She resented the fact that he begrudged the railroad fare to be with her, to comfort her in her grief. At least, he might telegraph; he knew that a letter would be two full days in transit.

Other days dragged tragically past as Thelma's aged mother clung weakly to the slender thread of life, and Thelma herself clung to the hope that the next day would bring word or a repentant Baird himself.

As her fears mounted she began to recall, more and more often, the words he had hurled at her just before he had stormed out of their little apartment. "There is no longer the word 'us' between you and me. You've finished that. Yes, Thelma, you've finished that once and for all."

He couldn't have meant it, she tried to reassure herself frantically. He had been angry with her before, he had said harsh things before, but his tempers had always passed over, usually within a few minutes, leaving him more than ordinarily tender in his contrition.

But ten days!

It was merciful that there should be one pain to counteract another. There were moments at her mother's bedside when Thelma, busy with her nursing, forgot Baird entirely. More than once, however, she was seized with the impulse to return to New York, but that, she knew, was folly. More than likely their trains would pass on the way.

The folks, of course, had asked about Baird, and Thelma had fibbed, at first calmly and at last desperately. She realized her face mirrored intense tragedy and was grateful that one is expected to look tragic when one's mother is about to die.

Along about the fifth day of Baird's terrifying silence, Thelma took to watching for the R. F. D. flivver as it topped the rise of Coffee Hill. Then she would rush down to the lane to wait, breathless, anxious, hopeful—for the letter. She told Myrtle and Ben, bravely, that there *were* letters. The fabrication grew, until she began to manufacture excerpts of what he was supposed to have written.

The funeral had been at the church in Twin Springs—the same church where she and Baird had been married—and Thelma's consciousness of what the minister said was blotted out again and again by a rush of memories. She remembered with an abstract, reminiscent smile breaking through her tears, how her knees had trembled; she recalled how proudly she had looked up at Baird, so tall, so handsome and yet so humanly self-conscious and frightened. She recollected how, with the gleaming circlet of gold on her finger, the thought had kept shouting through her mind: "My husband—always!"

The cemetery was across Tupper's Lake, and as Thelma stood beside the open grave, her weeping eyes lifted to look across the crystal shimmer of the water to the other side where the little white cottage stood like a doll's house in the distance. What happiness had been hers there! A flood of fresh tears blinded her and gave the illusion of the cottage dissolving into a misty nothingness. Somehow, in that moment the obstinate courage of her hope melted away. Again Baird was thundering at her, "There is no longer any 'us' between you and me!"

A choking cry rose in Thelma's throat. The hard clay clods rattled down upon the pine box which inclosed the casket; a neighborly, friendly hand touched her arm and drew her away. Only Ben Tully had guessed that this

inconsolable grief was not alone for the mother now gone.

Back to the silent farmhouse, Thelma had locked herself within her room and thrown herself across the bed. With her face pressed deep against the pillow, she repeated over and over: "Oh, Baird, my darling; Baird, my husband, come back to me."

Over the top of Coffee Hill poked the steaming radiator of the mail carrier's flivver, its loose fenders singing a discordant clatter to the vibration of the engine. The R. F. D. postman, a jolly-faced man, with ruddy jowls, which, more often than not, bristled with an unshaven stubble of beard, stared expectantly toward the house as he neared the Leffert farm. There was no sign of Thelma.

"Huh," he grunted in obvious disappointment, "I was kinder lookin' forward to seein' her break out all smiles when I give 'er this letter she's been so anxious fer." He honked the horn of the little car, loudly, persistently, and dropped the envelope postmarked "New York" into the box, along with some other mail for Ben Tully. As he was in a hurry, he drove on about the government's business.

Presently Ben came down the lane to see what there was, and his lips puckered into a sharp whistle of surprise as he saw that the topmost letter was for his sister-in-law. Instantly, he realized that he had made a mistake and he hurried back to the house lest Myrtle tell Thelma what he had said. In fact, he was just in time to intercept his wife in the act of going upstairs. He showed her the envelope.

"From Baird," he said with his customary economy of words. "Reckon I talked too quick. Just the same things ain't right 'tween 'em."

He climbed the steps and struck his knuckles against the door of Thelma's room. The sound of sobbing ceased immediately.

"Letter fer you, Thel—from New York."

There was a startled, hysterical exclamation, and Thelma Morrow fairly flew across the room to unbolt the door. Even with her cheeks streaked and her eyes swollen from tears, her face had burst into a happy radiance as she took the letter from him with fingers trembling in their eagerness. Ben Tully made no comment; without a word he turned and went down the stairs.

Thelma was almost beside herself in an ecstasy of relief. There could be no mistake; the handwriting was Baird's. She crushed the envelope to her mouth in a paroxysm of kisses before she broke open the flap.

What an idiot she had been to get it into her head that she *could* lose Baird! He was hers, forever hers.

As she unfolded the letter the first word leaped out at her and struck her in the face like a blow. He began with one word, "Thelma," without a single endearment. White to the lips, she stumbled back to the bed, so weak and shaken that she dared not trust her limbs. With horror-stricken eyes which danced the penned lines up and down in a distorted jumble, she read the awful words which told her that which, even in the darkest moments of her despair, she had not suspected could be possible —there was another woman!

How cruelly brief and curt it was, this letter which discarded her as a wife. Some of the sentences seared her like the stamp of a white-hot brand.

I hardly expect you to understand because you do not know the meaning of love. To you it is merely something which automatically accompanies a marriage ceremony. There has come into my life the woman who has in me the faith you lack; she has faith in me and my future because she loves me as you never did and never could. I shall not write again; this letter is irrevocably final and I shall take steps immediately to a divorce. Fortunately you are financially independent, but if you feel that I owe you any money consideration for our years together, I will do

what I can when I have begun to earn something from my literary work.

Thelma was too stunned for tears; the shock of it seemed to paralyze her brain. Minutes passed, many minutes, and she sat, limp, shaken, dazed. Then, suddenly, there was a transformation; her hands clenched, her eyes began to blaze with the fury of a tigress, a fury in which there was a touch of madness. With a determined intensity, almost terrifying in a woman who was normally so placid, she began moving about the room, packing up her belongings.

"He is mine—mine! I can't give him up; I won't! No other woman shall have him. Nothing will stop me—nothing!"

A little later in the afternoon Thelma Morrow was on her way to New York.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

CONVICTS TEACH THEMSELVES LAW

THE practice of convicts learning law while in prison so as to plead their own cases and secure new trials and eventually their release seems to be growing. A little while ago two men serving sentences appeared before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court of New York State to argue in their own behalf. One of the men was Marquis Curtis, serving a term of thirty years in Auburn Prison, for complicity in a ten-thousand-dollar burglary at Hempstead, Long Island. While in prison, Curtis said, he had managed to get hold of some law books, and the subject fascinated him so much that he undertook an exhaustive study of his own case.

The other convict lawyer was George Kammerer, serving an indeterminate sentence on Welfare Island on charges of grand larceny and forgery in the third degree. Kammerer also studied law in prison. Kammerer is a young offender, this being his first jail term, while Curtis is an old-timer and has been behind bars during most of the past twenty-five years.

SAVED FROM PRISON GRAVE

BECAUSE she was a woman and would be the first of her sex to be buried in the cemetery of the State Prison at San Quentin, California, Ethel Hill, an inmate of the penitentiary, who died a little while ago, was given a private funeral from a San Francisco undertaking establishment, instead of being interred near the men who had been executed by the State. It was felt that this would have been ignominious, as the woman was committed for forgery. She had been in prison for a few months, most of which time was spent in the prison hospital, where she died of a lingering illness. Through the efforts of Warden Frank J. Smith, several San Francisco women were interested in the case and arranged for the private burial. Ethel Hill had no relatives, in so far as could be learned, and preparations had been made for her burial in the prison cemetery, but the grave was filled in again when the funeral plans were changed.

LONG AND CURLY

By John Baer

Author of "The Missing Page," etc.

THE barber shop belonging to Joe Fillucci was the place where "Curly Sid" Cublan became a master mind. Curly had just been sheared of a mass of utterly white ringlets, and the barber was asking, "Shave?" when Cublan, looking into the large mirror in front of him, saw the reflection of "Checkers" Laporte.

Checkers was standing behind Cublan's chair, a bit to the right. His cap was under his right arm; he was counting his change. A coin slipped out of his hand to the floor and Checkers stooped to pick it up. A moment later Checkers set his cap jauntily on his head and walked out.

It was in that moment that Cublan got the idea.

"Yeh, sure, shave," he told the barber abstractedly. And as the chair was tilted back, Cublan touched a hand lightly to his nose. This action was quite involuntary; it had long been a habit with Cublan to touch his nose whenever he saw Checkers Laporte.

About two years previously, a blow from Checkers' fist broke that nose, and there was still a slight crook in it to keep reminding Cublan of the incident. They had had words, in a pool room, about the merits of a certain Mary Holton, and when Cublan ventured a disparaging remark, Checkers stepped up and "let him have it."

And while Cublan was groveling on the floor, Checkers dramatically announced to the gang that henceforth he was going straight, that he intended to marry Mary, and that the next time any one said anything against her, there would be a murder.

Checkers had kept his word. Nor had he found it difficult to carry out his reformation except in one respect.

Checkers was addicted to drugs, and he broke this habit only after a severe struggle. Other measures failing, he submitted voluntarily to arrest so that he would be sent to an institution for addicts. When he was released, he went up State and worked on a farm longer than a year to build up his strength.

Then he came back, quite a different Checkers. He had a job now as a mechanic in a garage, and evenings he acted as instructor in the gymnasium class of the neighborhood settlement house. More than that: he was now Mary Holton's husband.

All these facts went mulling around in Cublan's mind while he was being shaved. He had never had the chance to "square" the thrashing Checkers had given him; here was one grudge he had nursed for a long time. To this grudge was added envy at Checkers' good fortune.

Still, there was now no scowl on Cublan's face. In fact, he was smiling. He had a brilliant idea, and the idea tickled his self-conceit immensely. He was about to join the ranks of the supercriminals, to become one of the "big guys who use their noodles," the kind the newspapers referred to as master minds.

The job had been determined upon before Cublan came into the barber shop. He had met Checkers before in this place, for both of them had the habit of visiting Joe's between the hours of seven and eight. None of these previous meetings had been significant; Checkers, since his reformation, paid no notice to Cublan. But Cublan looked upon this meeting as a most fortunate occurrence. The job he had in mind was a sure thing, perfect, but a rather commonplace affair.

But the sight of Checkers, specifically, the sight of Checkers' cap, had changed all that. Cublan decided he could use that cap to polish the job off.

The object of attack in Cublan's little scheme was one Jake Totten. Keen, cruel, daring, Totten was held in great respect by the criminals who associated with him, and thus far he had escaped the attention of the police. Jake had no particular specialty; he had dabbled in a large variety of illegal enterprises. He had been a blackmailer, peterman, confidence man and passer of counterfeit money. At the present he was a combination fence and distributing agent for a drug syndicate.

Jake was the one fellow Cublan hated above all others, and his hatred was the deeper because he was to an extent dependent upon the supercrook. Cublan had to have his "snow" regularly, and Jake was the handiest source of supply. If Cublan went elsewhere, he took chances on falling into a police trap; and besides, the others were a shifty lot, moving about from place to place and could not be relied upon to have a ready stock.

Jake Totten took full advantage of his hold over Cublan. On general principles he despised Cublan because the latter was slow-witted, inefficient, and possessed no backbone. He called Cublan "errand boy" or "sappy," let him do his dirty work, took an occasional slam or kick at him and regularly cheated him. When Cublan was out of snow, Jake was utterly relentless. "Bring me something," he would say. And when Cublan brought it, he would allow him about five cents on the dollar for the stolen goods.

Well, Cublan was full of the stuff now and feeling a little like a master mind himself. In his exhilaration he felt a desperate courage and conceived the notion of striking back at Jake Totten. Double crossing was Jake's strong point. All right, he would play Jake's own game and do a bit of double crossing himself. He intended robbing Jake. He was certain his job would net him almost one thousand dollars' worth of

snow, and that alone would make it worth while. Besides, there was sure to be other junk lying around—stolen merchandise which other addicts had brought to Jake.

The bold Totten had retired to no stronghold; he lived in an easily accessible room and depended on his wits to save him from the police and on his reputation to save him from other criminals. And to date there had been none to attempt trickery against the "big guy."

Cublan was going to do it. Under the stimulation of the drug, his long-suppressed hatred got the better of him and made him superdefiant.

And now he had an idea which added zest to his original plan. That cap of Checkers—ha! It was strange it had not occurred to him before. Everybody in the neighborhood knew that cap. Checkers got his name from the caps he wore—checkered caps, never anything else. Dark-blue and green checkers in the winter, and in the summer months light and dark-gray and black checkers. That was the kind of cap he was wearing now: one of alternate light and dark-gray squares.

Cublan intended to steal that cap and leave it behind him in Jake Totten's room. Clever, that! Totten, of course, knew Checkers and he would recognize the cap, too. And Totten also knew that Checkers had once been a dope addict. What would Totten think? Easy! He would think that Checkers had gone back to his old habit; that Checkers' respectability was merely a bluff; that Checkers in reality was the Checkers of old, who, driven to desperation by his insane desire, had stolen the drugs.

And what would Totten do? Cublan grinned to think of it. A pretty feud that would make: Totten against Checkers. One or the other would be sure to "get it," and Cublan cared not which one it would be.

There was this also to be considered: In order to complete the job, it might be necessary to get rough with somebody. Never can tell; there's always the chance of a slip. Well, he was determined not to be caught. If he had to kill, he would kill. In that case, he would leave the cap for the cops. Pretty good, that! He'd get the loot, and after that it would be either Totten or the cops against Checkers.

Nor did Cublan overlook the fact that the best safety measure a crook can employ is to throw suspicion on somebody else. Looking at it from any angle, that cap idea was certainly a "wow." It was the kind of trick of which only master minds were capable.

"Yeh, use a tonic, a good one—the best you got in the place," he told the barber. He was already spending his money—and laughing.

One hour and a half later Cublan was in the neighborhood settlement house. He had been in this place frequently and knew every nook and corner of it. On the second floor he walked casually into a room used temporarily as a cloak room. A short time previously there had been a fire in the locker room which was now being repaired and enlarged. Meanwhile the gym class was using one of the smaller classrooms as a repository for hats and coats. Of this fact Cublan had been aware. In fact, one of the reasons why his idea appealed to him so immensely was the knowledge that it would be a simple matter for him to pilfer Checkers' cap.

The cloakroom was empty when Cublan entered it. He spotted Checkers' cap at once. But he did not act impetuously. Whistling rather loudly, he walked to the door and looked up and down the hall. No one was in sight. Cublan dodged back into the room, lifted the checkered cap from its hook and slipped it, folded, underneath his shirt. There-

upon he left the room and unconcernedly walked out of the building.

He thought himself pretty well able to imagine what would happen. At the end of the gym class, Checkers would fail to find his cap. He would assume that some one walked off with it by mistake; he had no reason to believe or even to suspect that any one had stolen it.

Curly Cublan killed a bit less than two hours in a card game in a house which was used for that purpose by a gang of his associates. Then he drifted back to a small cigar store two doors west of the settlement building. He bought some cigarettes and then, taking a position near the door from which he could see passers-by on the street, he engaged the proprietor in a conversation.

After several minutes he saw what he was waiting for. Checkers Laporte, coming from the settlement, passed the cigar store—and there was no covering on that thick mop of black hair.

The big trick was scheduled for midnight. At that hour, Cublan knew, Jake Totten was almost invariably in "Jug" Marren's speak-easy. It was in this place that Totten met some of the customers for the "snow" he peddled.

To gain access to the rear yard of the house in which Jake Totten lived, Cublan had only to climb over three fences. From the yard Cublan could see the window of Totten's living room on the second floor. The room was dark; it would be safe to go ahead at once.

Outside of this living room was the platform of the fire escape. In an emergency an iron ladder could be let down from the platform to the yard. At present the ladder was so hung that its lowest rung was out of Cublan's reach.

Cublan had prepared for this. Out of the small newspaper-wrapped parcel he had brought with him he took a long, thin, strong rope. After three trials, he threw one end of this rope, to which he had attached a small weight, through the lowest ladder rung. He then tied together the two ends of the rope and scaled the rope to the ladder.

Safely on the platform, he tried the window, and found it locked. That required him to use one of his old favorites. From the newspaper he took a piece of fly paper, unfolded it, and then glued it on the windowpane. One quick poke with his elbow was enough. The pane cracked, and the pieces, sticking to the paper, made no sound of breaking glass.

Thereupon Cublan simply tore off the paper, stuck a hand through the opening and released the window catch. A moment later he was in the room. He was wearing a mask and cotton gloves. He had forgotten nothing.

He had visited Totten often enough to know the layout of the place. There were three rooms: the bedroom and the bathroom besides the one he was in. Using his pocket flash light, Cublan made a quick examination of all three rooms and assured himself that he was alone.

The first thing to receive his concentrated attention was the top drawer of the bureau in the living room. He forced the drawer with a jimmy. Among the confusion of miscellaneous objects he found what he sought: small, gray envelopes which contained a white, powdery substance—snow.

But he was disappointed by the amount. The stuff was all ready for sale to the consumers, and as a buyer he knew what each envelope would cost him. In all there was about one hundred dollars' worth. He felt certain that a careful search of Totten's rooms would yield much more than that.

He recalled that he had once seen Totten haul a suit case from under the bed. He slid into the bedroom swiftly, noiselessly as a snake; he

played his flash light under the bed. But there was no suit case. Angered, he tackled the bedroom dresser. In one of its drawers he found a box of heavy wood from which he pried the lock.

He found four rings, two stickpins and two watches—one of them initialed H. H. F. Some poor bum must have stolen it and brought it to Jake. All of the rings were set with stones, and Cublan reflected that if the stones were real, the job would turn out to be worth while after all.

But snow was what he wanted most, a mountain of it if it could be had. There must be more of it somewhere in these three rooms; a careful search would be bound to locate it. He began in the clothes closet, looking on the shelf, passing his hands through the coats and tapping cautiously for a loose floor board. He ripped open the pillows on the bed and the mattress; then he ransacked the dresser again.

So intent was he on his business that the important fact that more than half an hour had passed since he entered Totten's place quite escaped his thoughts. He was consequently the more shocked when he suddenly heard voices and the sound of a key rattling in a lock.

Some one was entering the living-room door. Cublan was trapped; he was in the bedroom, and the living room had the only exit out of Totten's place. In a twinkling he whipped out his gun and, crouching behind the curtain, he trained it on the living-room door which was just opening.

Two men came in. The room was dark, but during the few seconds the door was open, enough light filtered in from the hall to allow Cublan to make a positive identification of the first of the men, who was carrying a valise. Jake Totten had come home, bringing some friend with him.

There was in the mold of Curly Cublan nothing heroic. Bold, brazen as a sneak, he invariably showed his true colors when the threat of danger was immediate. He knew he was certain to be detected. The envelopes with snow which he had removed from the bureau drawer were still lying on top of the bureau wrapped up in his newspaper. And he knew also that he could not hope to bluff his way past Totten. He could brag loudly when danger was far removed, but when danger was at hand he was brought quickly enough to the realization that he lacked both the wit and the courage to cope with it.

And so, in the panic of his fright, he turned instinctively and frantically to the only safety straw.

His trigger finger twitched and there was a spurt of flame and a loud report. Totten, at that moment, was standing in the center of the room, reaching for the electric light. His right arm dropped to his side and he lurched forward. Cublan fired two more shots—carefully and deliberately aimed. Jake Totten crumpled to the floor; the other man, whose face had constantly been held at such an angle that Cublan could not see it, fled from the room.

The trembling Cublan stepped forward, guiding his faltering feet by the light of his flash. The man on the floor was lying face down, motionless. Directly beside him was the suit case he had brought with him. As Cublan bent over it, a triumphant smirk came over his face. He recognized the suit case as the one Totten used to transport his drugs. Cublan did not pause to open it; merely lifting it told him what he wanted to know: that it must be nearly filled.

It was not until he had reached the platform of the fire escape that Cublan recalled Checkers Laporte's cap. He yanked it from under his shirt and threw it into the window of Totten's living room. Then he scrambled down the ladder. When he reached the bottom rung, he dropped the suit case and

the paper bundle he had snatched from the bureau and slid down the rope.

Less than ten minutes later Cublan was slinking into his own room. It was now raining, and Cublan had found the streets deserted. The loungers who hung around outdoors even after midnight in warm weather had been driven to cover, so that no one who might make an identification had seen Cublan with the suit case.

The lock was pried from the suit case. For several minutes, Cublan, eyes popping out of his head, stared at its contents. Here it was, an insane dream come true—snow—mountains of snow. Enough to gratify his unreasonable appetite for it, and enough left over to sell to other unfortunates! That was not all. Wrapped in the newspaper was more of the stuff, and in his pockets were rings, stickpins, watches.

A good job, a paying job, and neatly done, too! Not even Totten himself, if he was still alive, would have cause to suspect him. This was the kind of a job which would be talked about—gangster killed or badly wounded—big robbery—no clews. Ah, yes, one clew—a checkered cap—lost by the fellow who had shot Totten.

Twenty minutes passed, half an hour. To a man in a pleasant mood time passes rapidly. Like a man entranced, Cublan kept staring at his haul, gloating.

A soft tapping at his door suddenly jolted him into alertness. From the hall came a voice, scarcely above a whisper:

"Cublan—Cublan—open up, will you?"

"Who is it?" snapped up Cublan.

"'Snoop.'" The voice was louder now and Cublan recognized it as Snoop Bonard's. "Listen, you got some—some stuff? Cublan, I'm dyin' on my feet. Open, will you? I've got to have—say—I've tried everywhere. There was a crowd in front of Totten's place, so I didn't dare go in. I got money, Cublan——"

So that was it! A snow bird had come fluttering to his door—a snow bird who had money. Cublan had been in that position himself often enough to know just what it was like. A man who needs a "shot" will crawl to anybody—to other snow birds first, of course. Snoop Bonard had to have large doses. Cublan knew that, too.

Cublan carefully pushed the suit case under his bed with one foot. From the newspaper parcel he took one of the drug-filled envelopes; then he put the parcel under his bed blanket. He would sell to Snoop. Why not? The birds flocked together and helped each other out.

"Coming, Snoop," he said. Then he opened the door.

Snoop Bonard stepped in, followed by two other men, strangers to Cublan.

There was a puff on Bonard's left cheek and his lips were bruised. He glared wildly at Cublan a moment and then stepped forward and snarled.

"What'd I tell you? Look at his hair! I told you! He croaked Totten! He——"

One of the strangers stepped in front of Bonard and admonished: "Easy, Snoop, keep your head!"

In that instant the other stranger dropped to his knees and yanked the suit case out from under the bed.

"Look here, Bonard, was this the thing Totten was carrying when——"

"That's it! That's Totten's. Look out!"

The fear and desperation in Cublan's eyes had betrayed him, and in the instant his hand went to his hip pocket, two men leaped upon him and bore him to the floor. The third man jumped into the struggling mass, but the frenzied Cublan crazily fought on to utter exhaustion.

He was lifted into a chair and handcuffed. His head was down, his chin

on his chest. Some one pulled back his head and told him to look at the things on the small table in front of him—the suit case, the small, drug-filled envelopes, the rings, watches and stickpins, the gun with three empty chambers.

He broke down, then, and began to cry. "Yeh, I shot him. I fired from the bedroom. Let me alone! I—lemme rest."

One of the strangers patted his back. "Too bad, sonny, but you never had a chance. Why, you might as well have left a card with your name and address on it.

"Patrolman Shanks was on Totten's block when the shots were fired. Shanks caught Snoop Bonard when he came running out of Totten's place. There was a bit of a fight—Bonard was afraid it would be fastened on him—and then Shanks led Bonard up into Totten's room. Totten was already dead; all three shots hit him. Bonard came clean; said he had met Totten in the street and gone up with him to buy some snow. He explained about the suit case and all that. Well, some woman who heard the shots phoned the police, and Detective Getz here, and I—I'm Elkins—trotted around.

"The first thing we found was this checkered cap—see?" Elkins held the cap toward Cublan. "And in the cap and on the band we found a lot of hairs. Just by looking at them with the naked eye we saw the hairs were almost snow white, very long and curly, and from their slanted ends we could tell they must have been cut off and not pulled out. Wasn't that easy?

"I said to Bonard, 'Some one with long, curly white hair, who has recently had a hair cut, shot Totten. Know such a fellow?' And right off, Bonard says, 'Sure, that's Curly Cublan. I know he has white, curly hair. I was in the same place a short while with him tonight, and everybody there was kidding him about having a hair cut, because he was full of some tonic that smelled all over the place.'

"So that was that. We came around here at once. Bonard knew where you lived. No time lost at all."

Cublan looked up, dazed. "But that cap ain't mine—it belongs to Checkers Laporte."

"Tut!" exclaimed Detective Elkins. "Everybody knows Checkers, and while I thought at first maybe this might be his cap, I asked myself right away, 'How can a cap which has white, curly hair in it belong to Checkers, who is black-haired as a raven?' "

"But—but it *is* Checkers' cap."

"Tell that to the judge," said the detective.

The following day Detective Elkins visited Cublan in his cell.

"I've got everything cleared up," said Elkins. "I dropped in on Checkers and learned, strangely enough, that the cap we found in Totten's room does belong to Laporte. Now get this—it'll interest you. Checkers recalled that last evening he dropped his cap in Joe Fillucci's barber shop while he was standing behind your chair. You had just had a hair cut and the barber had just shaken your hairs from the cloth upon the floor. That's how your hairs came to be in Checkers' cap. Checkers had only been shaved; there were no black hairs from him. You stole the cap at the settlement house. Is that right?

"Well, sir, I take it you were trying to frame Checkers. What you actually did was to steal the one object which had in it that by which you would be betrayed to the police at once: long, curly, recently cut white hairs. In other words you put yourself to a lot of trouble to make sure that the police would start along the right trail without losing any time.

"That was touching off the job rather nicely—for us."

SPARKLING DANGER

By Edward Leonard

CHAPTER I.

THE HUNTED MAN.

THREE flights up in Mrs. Mamie Costello's furnished-room house, a girl was standing at an open window looking out into the night. Beyond the low roofs of the piers on the other side of the street, the East River rolled by, black and mysterious, and boat lights twinkled, yellow, green and red.

A damp, salty breeze, sweeping in from sea and harbor, fanned the girl's pale face and tossed her short, flaxen hair. She was a frail little thing, who in the faint illumination of the room seemed scarcely more than a child. But "Blondy" McBride was older than a first glance at her might suggest. She had seen twenty years of life and many sides of it, and there was nothing childish or unsophisticated in the sharp, alert, gray eyes that were now looking down upon the passers-by.

Apparently life had not been easy with her. Her clothes were cheap and shabby, and the room, with its bare, grimy walls and few pieces of dilapidated furniture, was a forlorn place that spoke of wretched poverty. A gas jet at the end of a wall bracket gave a low, feeble flame that cast dancing shadows. It was well that there were no bright lights in Mamie Costello's house. They would have revealed too much of squalor and misery.

So absorbed was Blondy McBride in watching the street that she scarcely moved, until there came a knock on her door. The sound startled her. Slowly she turned away from the window, her eyes full of suspicion, and for a moment stood hesitating. She was quite sure the man she was waiting for had not come into the house and she had expected no one else. She was still undecided whether to ignore the summons, when the door was pushed open. A slovenly woman with thin, gray hair and a hard, expressionless face stepped into the room.

"Why didn't you let me know it was you?" the girl cried after a quick little gasp of relief. "You had me scared stiff for a minute, Mamie. How could I know it wasn't some fly cop or a nosey plain-clothes guy from headquarters snooping round?"

Mamie Costello sank languidly into a chair. "Have you got seven dollars handy?" she asked.

"Less than that," Blondy admitted with a shrug of her shoulders. "And I need it. I gotta eat sometimes, ain't I? What's the matter with you, anyhow, Mamie? We've known each other a long time and I've never gyped you yet. I'll pay you for the room when I get a job."

"When you get a what?" Mrs. Costello demanded with a puzzled frown.

"I pounded a typewriter once, Mamie. And I can do it again if I find the chance. Believe me, I could make those keys hum. I was known as the speed queen."

The landlady drew a long breath. "You pounding a typewriter!" she exclaimed. "Why, kid, you'd earn only chicken feed to what you can clean up when you get out and lift the leathers. You're getting well again now and you can go back to the old game and live swell and easy. If you on'y had a little more nerve you'd be the queen o' the dips. There ain't any of 'em that's as smooth as you. Why, kid, if I had them quick, clever fingers of yours I'd be wearing sparklers and eating off gold plates."

The girl's sensitive face suddenly grew stern. "I'm off of the crooked work for good," she declared with a little toss of her head. "I'm handing you the right dope when I say I'm looking for a typewriter job."

"Whazza matter?" Mrs. Costello demanded with a blank stare. "You going loony?"

For a moment Blondy stood silent, as if not quite decided whether she should take the landlady into her confidence. "It's because of Jimmie," she said presently. "He didn't want to marry me till I'd made up my mind to go straight."

A sudden look of disgust came into Mrs. Costello's usually impassive features. "Jimmie Dell!" she muttered contemptuously. "You're going to marry him and go straight, eh? All right. Try it, kid, and you'll find out what it means to go hungry. He's nothing but a poor little piker. He never pulled off a big job in his life. And since he did time up the river, he hasn't even had nerve enough to go after small stuff."

"He's no crook," Blondy protested. "They sent him up the river when he wasn't much more than a boy for a job that some old-timers persuaded him into —the only crooked work he ever did. He's been going straight for three years and he's going straight for the rest of his life. If the trucking firm he was working for hadn't gone broke, he'd be able to marry me right now."

The landlady studied the girl's face sharply. "Maybe I've sized the little guy up wrong," she admitted. "He ain't no use for crooked work. He ain't fitted for it. And maybe, since that's the on'y way he can make a living, he'll stay on the level. But you, kid! You can't go straight! It ain't in your blood. Nobody in your family ever went straight. And you've got your old man's hands, kid—long, clever, nervous fingers just like his—fingers that could keep you on easy street. That old man of yours was the slickest card shifter in the country, and you're just as smooth and quick as he was, on'y you're lifting the leathers instead of working the cards. You just take a tip from me and stick to what you're born for. Show some nerve and go after the big stuff. Use your head as well as your hands and you'll be rolling in money."

Apparently this advice failed to impress Blondy, for, with a shrug of her shoulders, she turned to the window and again stood looking down into the street. "Jimmie was coming to-night," she said wistfully. "He ought to be here now."

"Forget him!" snapped out Mrs. Costello. "Don't tie yourself to a piker when you could be wearing di'monds. You go out and play your old game in the crowds to-night and you'll come back with a roll. On'y don't think I'm worrying about the seven bones. I ain't any too flush, but we can let that pass for a while."

From the street came a sudden roar of voices. Blondy, leaning out of the window, gave a little gasp. The next moment she drew back into the room, her eyes shining with excitement. "He ran in here!" she cried breathlessly.

"Huh? Who?" Mrs. Costello demanded, rising hurriedly from her chair.

"I don't know," the girl answered. "I didn't see him very plain. A guy being chased by a couple of plain-clothes dicks. Listen! He's coming up the stairs."

Mrs. Costello ran to the half-open door and closed it. "I hope he's no lodger of mine," she gasped out. "This house has got a bad enough name with the cops already."

The closed door failed to keep out the sound of running feet on the stairs. The fugitive was coming rapidly nearer. The next moment the door of the room was thrown open and a man rushed in. He was without a hat, and the dark hair falling over his forehead was wet with perspiration.

"Jimmie!" screamed the girl.

Again a sound of running feet came from the stairs, and the man, gasping for breath, closed the door softly. He was short and slim and there was a very youthful look in his hot, flushed face and sparkling blue eyes. He turned the key in the lock and swung round to confront Blondy. "They're after me!" he whispered breathlessly. "The bulls! Quick, kid! I've got to hide here somewheres. If I'm caught it's up the river for me—maybe a life term or the chair."

"Oh, Jimmie, Jimmie!" the girl whimpered. "And I thought you were going straight—that there was never going to be any more crooked work."

She turned away from him with a cry of alarm. The door he had locked behind him was standing wide open, and Mrs. Costello was running through the hall crying "Police!"

To Jimmie Dell that cry was like a stunning blow between the eyes. It seemed to leave him weak and helpless, unable to move. "The old cat!" he whispered hoarsely. "She's giving me up!"

For a moment the two stood dazed, staring at the open door hopelessly. It seemed scarcely worth the effort to close it. Apparently the last chance of escape was gone. And then suddenly hope came back.

"Did you hear that?" Jimmie gasped out with a start.

In blank amazement they looked at each other as they listened to Mamie Costello calling down the stairs to the pursuers, who had paused for a moment to search the dark hall on the floor below. "He's headed for the roof!" she was crying wildly. "I tried to stop him and he struck me!"

Blondy's wits returned with a rush. "She's saving you, Jimmie!" she whispered tremulously as she darted forward to close the door; and Jimmie, with a long breath of relief, dropped limply into a chair. For a few tense moments he sat there crouching forward with his face buried in his hands, while Blondy stood against the door listening.

Not another word passed between them, until at last Mrs. Costello came

back to the room. "They've gone," she announced. "I bluffed 'em and they think you've made a get-away over the roofs. They're a couple of good guys—friends of mine—and I've always been on the level with 'em. I guess they don't suspect nothing at all. But you better stay here a while, bo. You can never be sure about those headquarters birds. They may be watching the house."

With the sudden relaxation from suspense Blondy's eyes were beginning to kindle with angry reproach, as she stared at the exhausted young man crouched in the chair. "You four-flusher!" she cried wrathfully. "You begged me to go straight on your account, and I've been doing it, even though I'd been sick for weeks and was down and out. And now you've gone and pulled off some crooked job yourself."

"Lay off, kid," Jimmie pleaded, raising his face from his hands. "Go easy with me. I'm all in, and I can't stand no tongue lashing from you. It wasn't me that pulled the job. It was Miller—the guy they call 'Limpy Looey.' I didn't have anything to do with it at all. I was framed."

Blondy gave a bitter laugh. "That's what they all say," she sneered. "Come across with the right dope, Jimmie. I'm sick of hearing about frame-ups. I've never believed one yet. They're all bluffs—fakes."

"It's the truth, Blondy," he insisted. "A murder frame-up if old Tom Shaddock dies."

Blondy's face clouded with fear. "Shaddock!" she gasped out. "You—you were after that money he owes you?"

"Yes; the money he's owed me ever since his trucking business that I was working for went to smash. He had the money all right—he's got lots of it—but he wouldn't give me a cent, and I made up my mind I'd make him. I told some of the boys in McQuirk's pool room that I knew Shaddock carried a big roll with him all the time and that I was going over to his office and tell him he'd got to fork out what was coming to me. He's got a little office in an old building down here on the water front and there's a dark, narrow hall leading from the street to the old man's door. After hanging round in the pool room about half an hour I started out to find him. When I got halfway through the dark hall, I heard somebody coming out of his office, and a couple of seconds later Limpy Looey sneaked past me on his way to the street. Then I pulled the office door open and walked in. The first thing I noticed was a piece of lead pipe lying on the floor. The next second I caught sight of old Shaddock lying beside his desk with a big, ugly welt across his forehead. I thought he was dead, and I got scared and beat it out there quick, for there were plenty of people who knew about the trouble I'd been having with him, and I knew there'd be talk that I'd killed him. Gee, Blondy! I lost my nerve then, and I went out of that building like a shot. And just as I came out of the door the cop on the beat happened along and got sight of me. He knew who I was all right, but of course he didn't know then what had happened inside, so he didn't stop me."

"Bo, you're sure in bad!" Mrs. Costello broke in. "Somebody found the body and then the bulls started out hunting for you, eh?"

"He was found alive," Jimmie explained hurriedly. "A friend of mine tipped me off that they'd sent him to the hospital. But for all I know he may be dead by now. He was in bad shape. I've been dodging bulls for the last two hours. And then those two that chased me in here got sight of me down the street."

Blondy was no longer skeptical. She

was a picture of despair. "Oh, Jimmie!" she wailed. "What'll we do? You were going straight; and now you've got to take the blame for another man's job. It must have been that Limpy Looey that did it. I've heard of him before. Somebody told me a long time ago that he was one of the worst double crossers that ever was."

"Of course he did it," Jimmie said: "He was in that pool room when I said Shaddock carried a big roll and that I was going to see him to get my money. So he must have made up his mind he'd go and get the roll before I got there. He knew that if he had to use his lead pipe on the old man, I'd be blamed for it."

"Some folks find it don't pay to go straight, girlie," Mrs. Costello muttered with a sigh. "You better go back to the old game. That's what you was made for. If you're going to stick to this bird, it's going to take a barrel of money to help him out of the fix he's in now—money for his get-away, and money to hire a classy lawyer if he's caught. Can't you see I'm handing you the right dope, kid?"

Blondy didn't answer. She was looking at Jimmie. And the hopeless, despairing look in Jimmie's eyes was such as a man might have who was being swept helplessly down over a cataract. Luck was against them both. In this moment it was fast breaking their grip on good resolutions, and it seemed as though an overwhelming wave of fate was carrying them back into the underworld of crime from which they had struggled so hard to escape.

Then Blondy's little figure stiffened, and her eyes blazed with sudden determination. "You can betcha life I'm going back to the old game, Mamie!" she cried. "From now on I'm on the crook. You just watch me. I'll show you what these hands of mine can do."

CHAPTER II.

THE WOMAN IN THE SUBWAY.

IT was long after midnight before it seemed wise for Jimmie Dell to make his get-away, and during the hours of waiting in Blondy's room, his nerves had become badly shaken. As Mamie Costello had remarked, he was not fitted for a crooked life. He was too emotional, too lacking in cool bravado, too panicky in the face of danger to be a success in matching his wits with the police. And the criminal tain wasn't in his blood. The ways of the underworld had never held any lure for him. He had always wanted to go straight. But now the straight road seemed to be closed to him and he was desperate.

A careful study of the situation had convinced Mrs. Costello, who was a woman of long experience in such matters, that the street door was being watched. In prowling about looking for signs of danger, she had discovered two suspicious-looking figures loitering in a shadowy spot only a few steps away from the house, and after a long absence she returned to Blondy's room to announce that if Jimmie left by way of the street, he would find himself in the clutches of the law.

"You're going over the roofs, bo," she advised. "It's your only chance. They're pretty near the same height along this row, and you can get as far as the next alley. That'll lead you through to the street on the other side of the block. If they've been watching the whole block they're quit by this time, and it's a dark night. You can slip away easy. When you get to that alley, you'll find a fire escape running clear to the roof, and a slim little fella like you can make the drop from the bottom without getting hurt."

Jimmie's head drooped despondently. He didn't have any heart at that moment to go out and take his chances

with fate. "It don't seem hardly worth while," he muttered. "What's the use? They'll get me some time. Maybe I better give myself up."

"Say! Now looka here, bo," Mrs. Costello protested. "You gotta buck up. If it was on'y you I had in mind I'd say, 'G'wan and turn yuhself into the dicks if yuh wanta,' but I'm thinking about this little girlie. We gotta remember her feelings. For her sake you better make a clear get-away if yuh can."

"Give me a little time, Jimmie, and I'll raise dough enough to get you to the other side of the world," Blondy cried.

"And don't you try sneaking back here too quick," Mrs. Costello advised. "If the bulls find out you've got a girl here they'll know what to do all right. They know that every runaway bonehead that's got a girl comes snooping back to her some time, and then they get him. You better come back over the roofs. You can get up to 'em somehow, and I'll leave the door up there unfastened."

With his hat in his hands Jimmie still hesitated. His eyes turned miserably to Blondy. "Don't go crooked again," he pleaded. "If you got caught and sent up the river I'd know it was all because of me, and I'd feel like killing myself."

Blondy's face hardened. "Forget it!" she cried fiercely. "You're going to have all you can do keeping under cover, without worrying about me."

A moment later they followed Mrs. Costello to the stairs leading to the roof. Presently Blondy, standing at the door of the hatch, was watching Jimmie as he moved away over the housetops. The night was black, but a few faint stars hung low in the summer sky. From far off came the steady, incessant hum of the city, like the droning of a bee, and now and then a river steamer bellowed hoarsely. The little girl of the underworld waited until the dim figure her eyes were following faded away into the dark. And then suddenly all the bitterness of life seemed to sweep over her.

"I guess Mamie was right," she whispered sadly as she turned back to the stairs. "It don't pay to go straight."

And the next day she was out in the city's crowds looking for a chance to dip her quick, clever fingers into a pocket or a shopping bag. In the evening she came back to Mamie Costello's house with more money than she had had in weeks. The landlady had been busy during the day acquiring information. Old Tom Shaddock, she had learned, was suffering from a fractured skull, and his condition was serious. He had been robbed of several hundred dollars, so his brother announced, but the loss of the money was a small matter. It was the brutality of the crime and the fact that it might turn out to be a murder that was stirring the police to do their best to find the guilty man.

The old police maxim, "Look for the woman," led promptly to the discovery that Jimmie Dell had a girl, and that the girl was Blondy McBride. Thereafter Mamie Costello's house was shadowed constantly, and Blondy was fearful that Jimmie would return too soon. For the present the whole neighborhood was full of peril for him.

Days passed and he failed to come. A week went by. Still she had no news of him. But she knew that some time he would be coming to her over the roofs. As matters stood she hoped he would stay away for a good many more days, for the police showed no signs of relaxing in their efforts to capture him, and old Tom Shaddock was hovering between life and death. Urged on by the conviction that money, if only there was enough of it, could accomplish almost anything, Blondy prospered.

She began to have visions of living in wealth and luxury with Jimmie. She might even be able at last to bring a day of reckoning to Limpy Looey Miller. She knew the man only by sight, but the mere thought of him roused her to fury.

Once, a few days after the crime she felt sure he had committed, she passed him on the street. He was a tall, round-shouldered man with shifty eyes and a game leg, which gave him just enough of a limp to be noticeable. He had never known Blondy, and he passed by, oblivious of the fact that her eyes were flashing at him wrathfully. He was wearing new and expensive clothes and there was a diamond pin in his tie. She had never seen him looking so prosperous or so cheerful, and her thoughts were bitter.

The lobbies of the expensive hotels and other places frequented by people of means were tempting hunting grounds to Blondy, but they were dangerous. The subway crowds offered the surest and safest opportunities, especially in the rush hours. She could slip a roll of bills from the pocket of a man or a purse from a woman's bag as the train was drawing into a station and know that the next moment she could make good her escape if, by some freak of chance, the victim should discover what had happened. But she worked so dexterously, her hands were so amazingly quick, her touch so soft, that it was rare indeed that such a crisis arose, and success brought her more and more confidence in herself. Never in her life had she fallen into the clutches of the police, and now she was beginning to believe she was far too clever for disaster to overtake her.

But there was never a thief, no matter how clever and experienced, who was entirely safe. Chance, the most capricious of goddesses, holds him always at her mercy. And it was so with Blondy. There was one peculiarity of subway trains that she had failed to notice. Under certain conditions the windows of the cars act as mirrors. The walls of the tunnel, or a passing train on the next track sometimes turn them into fairly efficient reflectors.

The train was packed almost to the point of suffocation—an ideal condition from Blondy's point of view. As a rule the rush-hour crowds are not a prosperous-looking lot, but she had set her eyes on a tall, handsome, flashily dressed brunette whose lavish display of diamond rings suggested a fat pocketbook. Swinging carelessly from the woman's wrist was a little, silk, gold-embroidered bag, which in that tightly packed crowd would have tempted the most timid of thieves.

Blondy, short and slim and therefore attracting little attention by her efforts at worming her way through the press of passengers, succeeded presently in getting within reach of the bag. She waited until she felt quite sure that the next train was only a few seconds away. Then she deftly unfastened the catch of the bag and slipped in her fingers. The next instant she had pulled out a purse which from the feel of it was well filled with money. She had barely concealed it under her dress when the woman, whose back had been half turned, swung round and confronted her with an angry cry.

"You give that purse right back," the victim demanded sharply, fastening a tight grip on the girl's arm, "or I'll have you arrested."

Blondy steeled herself to meet the crisis. "You've made a mistake," she returned haughtily. "I don't know anything about your purse."

"Oh, yes, you do," the woman insisted. "I saw the whole trick in that window and I know just where you've put it."

At that instant the train stopped.

"Here's my station!" the woman

cried, pushing her way to the nearest door and dragging Blondy after her. "You come along with me. I'm going to find a policeman."

Blondy found the grip on her arm too strong to break. In spite of her struggles, she was hauled out onto the station platform, where a curious crowd gathered around them.

"You let me go and I'll give you back your purse," said Blondy, who, quick though she was, had found no opportunity of slipping her loot from under her dress and throwing it away unobserved.

But the woman was obdurate. "Oh, no!" she cried. "I'll get my purse all right without any help from you. I know where it is and I'm going to keep my eyes open so that it stays there till I find a policeman."

Still keeping an iron grip on her prisoner, she led her up the stairs and along the street. There was no policeman in sight. For a short distance a part of the crowd followed at their heels, but presently the two found themselves alone. To Blondy the situation was desperate. She could think of nothing but to throw herself on the mercy of her captor.

"Don't turn me over to the cop," she pleaded. "I did it because I was broke. I was out of work and hungry."

The woman's hard face softened, and in its quick change of expression Blondy thought she saw hope. But the next moment she was very much disillusioned.

"See here, youngster, you can't make me believe that with such clever fingers as yours you're broke," the woman said with a smile. "You'll never go hungry. You're the smoothest artist in your line I ever saw. If I hadn't happened to be looking at that glass I wouldn't have known I'd been gypped. You did that job as quick as a flash. You can't kid me. I'm too wise. You're young, but those hands of yours have had a lot of experience lifting the leathers."

"All right. You're wise to me," Blondy admitted. "But what good is it going to do you to send me to prison? I'd probably get a good stiff term and I'd rather kill myself. If you've got any heart, I don't see how you'd get any satisfaction out of it."

A block away a policeman swung around a corner, and Blondy's heart sank. He was coming slowly toward them. But the woman did not seem to notice him. Apparently she was absorbed in thought.

"You hand over that pocketbook, youngster," she demanded after a moment, and Blondy promptly surrendered it.

The policeman was only a few steps away now, and every nerve in the girl's little body was quivering. But the woman ignored him. He passed by. A moment and he had disappeared.

Blondy drew a long breath of relief. "I knew you must have a heart!" she gasped out. "I'm going to be grateful to you for the rest of my life. You had me scared stiff."

The woman grinned. "You come along with me, kiddo," she said, "and we'll talk things over. I've been doing some hard thinking about you. When I find a youngster as clever as you are, I'm interested. Come around to my room and get acquainted. Maybe I can be some help to you."

A few minutes later they arrived at a brownstone house where a sign announcing "Rooms to Rent" hung conspicuously above the doorbell. They made their way inside, and after climbing a flight of stairs entered a stuffy bedroom where the air was heavy with perfume. The place was cheaply pretentious. Long curtains of imitation lace hung over the one window all the way to the red carpet. An embroidered spread of vivid colors covered the bed. Crude oil paintings of the sort that can

be picked up for two or three dollars apiece decorated the walls, and the two chairs were patent rockers, upholstered in red plush.

"Now sit down, kid, and make yourself at home," said the woman amiably. "I don't suppose you ever heard of Blanche Markoe. No? Well, that's me —Mrs. Markoe. Got a divorced husband somewheres if he ain't dead. Take my advice, kiddo, and stay single unless you can find a sucker with a big bank roll. The men are all fakes."

Blondy sat down in one of the patent rockers, and Mrs. Markoe produced cigarettes. Presently the perfumed air grew dense with tobacco smoke. Mrs. Markoe was studying her guest sharply.

"I've been wondering, girlie, whether you've ever done any office work," she remarked after a few moments. "Ever had a job as a stenographer?"

"I had a few months of it once," Blondy admitted. "I wasn't so bad at it either. When it comes to pounding the typewriter I was a speeder."

Mrs. Markoe's eyes brightened. It was plain that this was a bit of information that pleased her immensely.

"Kid, you're an awful clever dip," she observed after a thoughtful pause, "and I can't help admiring your work. It's pretty smooth. But that line is dangerous, and you gather in nothing but chicken feed a good deal oftener than any stuff that's worth the risk of being pinched. You're clever enough to try something better."

Blondy's eyes narrowed. She was beginning to realize that this woman she had robbed was on the crook herself. "What you got on your mind?" she asked.

"How'd you like a chance of going after some real big stuff?" Mrs. Markoe suggested.

For a moment Blondy considered the proposition. "If it isn't too risky I guess it would suit me all right," she decided.

"There isn't any risk in it at all," Mrs. Markoe assured her. "Not for you, anyhow. And we'll go fifty-fifty. That's fair, ain't it? It's the biggest chance of your life, kid. Frisking subway crowds is nothing but piker's work compared to it. You'll clean up thousands—tens of thousands."

Blondy's heart gave a jump. Somewhere in the big city Jimmie Dell was wandering, a desperate, hunted man, penniless and hungry perhaps. It might take even the tens of thousands this woman spoke of so glibly to save him from prison—to save him perhaps even from a death sentence.

"You might as well spill the good news right now, Mrs. Markoe," she said. "I've got my ears open."

And Blanche Markoe proceeded to show Blondy the way to fortune.

CHAPTER III.

IN THE DIAMOND OFFICE.

IN the course of her adventurous career Blanche Markoe had tried a wide variety of shady and desperate methods of fattening her pocketbook, but it was not until the forming of a chance acquaintance with Rosie Klein, a hard-working and perfectly respectable young woman who roomed on the floor above her, that she had ever seriously considered applying her wits to the wholesale jewel market. Miss Klein happened to be a stenographer in the employ of Herman Tessler, a diamond importer in Maiden Lane. Having learned that Miss Klein, with matrimony in prospect, was about to give up her job, Mrs. Markoe proceeded to cultivate her friendship adroitly. It seemed to the experienced adventuress that a glittering opportunity was presenting itself. If she could only contrive to place a young woman of her own choosing in Miss Klein's job, the rest of the problem might be easy. And Miss Klein, she soon discovered, had

enough influence with the jewel dealer to be able to name her own successor in the office. It was not long before the stenographer, having no friend of her own in mind for the place, agreed to recommend to her employer Mrs. Markoe's niece. It then devolved upon Mrs. Markoe, who didn't have a relation in the world, to find the "niece." In this difficult undertaking the fates had now been kind to her, for here was Blondy McBride, efficient enough as a stenographer to hold the job and clever enough as a thief to loot the office.

So it came about that on the day after Miss Klein took a final farewell of her corner in Tessler's private room, Blondy arrived to fill the vacancy. And Blondy soon proved herself to be thoroughly satisfactory. Indeed, the speed with which her nimble fingers tapped the typewriter keys won her employer's admiration.

Tessler's offices were six stories up from the street in the rear of one of Maiden Lane's oldest jewel buildings. But, though the building itself was antiquated, the equipment of this importer's room was thoroughly up-to-date. Steel-barred inner doors allowed strangers access only as far as the little vestibule extended until an employee had assured himself, from behind a barred window, that they were above suspicion. Steel bars guarded the windows that looked down upon the little cement-floored courtyard in the rear. The whole place was strung with the alarm wires of a private patrol system. The safe in an alcove of the main room was of manganese steel that would have defied the most ingenious cracksman in the world, and its ponderous round door was doubly fastened at night with a time-lock.

But during working hours often a million dollars' worth of loose diamonds were distributed about on the tables and scales of the two examiners, in the unfastened drawers of the stock cabinet and on Tessler's own desk. The new stenographer was thrilled and amazed by the immense display of wealth around her. Whenever she glanced up from her machine, some gorgeous pile of sparkling stones met her eyes. Through the open door she could look into the main room, where the examiners were at work, and often Tessler himself would have a glittering fortune spread out before him on his desk, only a few feet away from her own. Here were opportunities such as she had never dreamed of. Many times a day a chance came to lay her hands surreptitiously on stones worth such great sums that her brain reeled at the thought of their value.

But she soon discovered that, though she might easily gain temporary possession of riches, it would be a much more difficult matter to get away with them. A little before closing time, the stock was always carefully and systematically checked up. At such a time the disappearance of not even a single stone could pass unnoticed, and in that event every employee in the place would fall under suspicion at once.

She was also troubled by the fact that all of the most prominent jewel offices in the street seemed to be under the close and constant care of the detective bureau of the jewelers' protection union. Sometimes Mat Hesterberg, the portly chief of this bureau, slipped in for a chat with Tessler, but more often there was a visit from Hesterberg's star man, Wilson, a tall, lean, stoop-shouldered, red-haired individual known as "Whispering" Wilson because of the fact that a chronic affection of the throat had almost destroyed his voice.

This Whispering Wilson began to get on Blondy's nerves. The queer, searching look that he always cast upon her filled her with alarm. She could never get him out of her thoughts.

Never a day passed that she did not get sight of his ungainly figure. He seemed to be everywhere. If he failed to appear in the office she would be sure to meet him in the street, in the restaurant where she went for lunch. She would see him in the little store around the corner in Nassau Street where she sometimes went to shop or he would be loitering at the head of the subway stairs as she set out to return to Mamie Costello's house. Never before had she realized that it was possible for anybody to be quite so ubiquitous.

So; for a time, caution held Blondy's quick hands in check whenever she gazed from the corner of a wary eye at Tessler's treasures and Whispering Wilson became a terrible obsession. This red-haired guardian of the street with his crafty little eyes and his hoarse whisper was a constant problem to her. At times she was convinced that he suspected her. But he was so affable, so mild-mannered, apparently so shiftless and so easy-going, that often she found herself scoffing at her fear of him. Unannounced and unexpected, he would come slouching into Tessler's room at various hours of the day. Then, after accepting one of the importer's long cigars, he would sit smoking and chatting with his chair tilted back against the wall, his long, thin legs sprawled out grotesquely and his eyes as alert and watchful as a hawk's.

"Herman, if I was a crook, I'd get a job in a place like this and make a clean-up just before I went out to lunch," he remarked one day to the importer, while Blondy pounded her machine so near by that she could hear his whisper distinctly above the patter of the keys. "You dealers leave too much of your stuff lying round loose. You'd be wiser to keep what's not in use on the scales tables in the safe."

But Tessler laughed at him. "How far would you get?" he retorted. "The stones would be missed inside of half an hour, and that bureau of yours keeps a description of everybody on my pay roll, as you know. You'd be pinched inside of a week—more likely inside of a day. I'm not worrying about my stuff, Billy—not so long as you're on the job. If anybody ever made a clean-up here you'd get him some time, you old bloodhound."

And after that the outlook didn't seem quite so rosy to Blondy. But gradually Blanche Markoe, whom she kept informed from day to day of affairs at the office, reassured her.

"You don't have to worry about yourself at all," the woman insisted. "All you've got to do is to stick to the job till you can be sure in advance of just when you can make a good clean-up. I'll attend to getting the stuff out of there. By the time they find out it's gone, you won't have it."

Blondy convinced herself before long that there was always one hour of every day when she could always be sure of getting possession of at least a handful of Tessler's jewels. "Just one handful," she told Blanche Markoe. "No more than that. I'm speedy, but I'm going to have only half a second to pull off the job. If I put in any more time on it than that I might get caught. One handful of the kind of stones I'm going to lift will be worth a mint of money."

The daily situation that at last had given Blondy her idea was based on an office system that was almost as invariable as clockwork. Regularly at twelve o'clock Tessler, his clerk who received callers at the barred, vestibule window and Blondy herself went out to their respective lunch places. The clerk and Blondy always returned exactly one hour later, but Tessler, fond of lingering with friends in the trade who joined him at his midday meal, often remained away longer. At half past twelve, the two jewel examiners went out for an hour. At half past one

Sutherland, the old bookkeeper, tottered away to his lunch and returned at half past two.

So here was a state of affairs that left Sutherland alone in the main room where the stock cabinet stood for an hour, and for half an hour during that time Blondy was in the office. There was never any doubt of that, for the young clerk always returned directly to his post at the vestibule window. The old bookkeeper, a strict disciplinarian, could be trusted to see to it that the young man did no loitering in the main room.

At all hours of the day the smoothly sliding drawers of the stock cabinet were fairly well filled with diamonds, wrapped in tiny flat parcels of white tissue paper. These parcels were kept packed there close together, edges up, like a collection of filing cards. Sutherland, while alone in the room, was responsible for this stock, and, sitting at his flat-topped desk, he faced the cabinet. While the jewel examiners were on duty there were always at least two pairs of eyes guarding it. While they were at lunch, this duty devolved upon the bookkeeper alone. Sutherland was nearsighted. But, though he was unable to see the cabinet very distinctly from his position at the other end of the room, anybody approaching it would be observed by him at once.

The morning of the day after she had reported her inspiration to Mrs. Markoe, Blondy complained to Tessler that her typewriter was not working properly.

"Call up the company and get 'em to send somebody around to fix it," he ordered. "You'll find their number on that telephone list hanging there over your desk."

She found the number, and, turning to the telephone close to where she was sitting, gave it to the operator. Presently the company's office answered. Tessler heard his stenographer give his instructions about the machine. However, with her back turned to him, he was unable to observe that not only was she throwing her voice away from the receiver but that she was holding the hook down. The result was that presently the company's office hung up in disgust.

This was at quarter of twelve o'clock. Promptly, at the sounding of the noon whistles, Tessler went out to his lunch, and his stenographer followed his example almost as soon as he was out of the room.

It wasn't much of a lunch that Blondy ate that day—only a cup of coffee and half of a roll—for her appetite was gone. There was no room in her busy mind for thoughts of food. She was about to attempt a job so big as to be far beyond the limits of all her previous ambitions. A quick turn of her hand was presently going to put her on easy street for life. And that long, slender-fingered hand must be quicker, surer, defter than it had ever been before. If it should fail her, if it should slip, if it should drop even one tiny parcel of diamonds from its clutch, she would be overwhelmed by disaster. Little hand of destiny! It held not only her own fate but Jimmie Dell's, and it must not fail.

Her nerves were quivering ominously as she made her way back from the restaurant. She realized that somehow she must shake off her fast-growing fears or they would ruin her, for the crucial moment had almost arrived. She thought of Jimmie, and with a desperate effort of will she steadied herself.

Instead of going immediately up to the office, she waited outside the building until she had seen the clerk returning from his meal. Two or three minutes after the clerk, she took the elevator to the sixth floor, and presently entered her employer's little vestibule. As she had expected, the clerk was

already on duty inside the barred window. She passed on into the main room. Old Sutherland was seated grimly at his desk as usual. At the other end of the room stood the stock cabinet. To get to Tessler's private door she must pass within a few inches of it at most.

For a moment she hesitated, for once more fear was clutching at her and shaking her nerves. Then suddenly the courage and nervous force of desperation stirred her to action, and she moved across the room. She knew that behind her the old bookkeeper's eyes were watching her steadily. But fortunately they were nearsighted eyes. They could see her figure, but at the distance of the length of the room a dexterous movement of a hand as quick as hers would be sure to escape his observation. But if that hand should fail and she should pause for a single second in front of the cabinet, his suspicious nature would be roused at once. Later in the day, with the developments that were sure to follow what she was about to do, he would then have the clew to her secret.

Suddenly, as she passed the front of the jewel drawers, the hand that was the nearer to them shot into action with a speed that even her uncannily clever card-shifting father could never have equaled. A drawer was opened and closed so swiftly and softly that its movement would have escaped the observation of far better eyes than old Sutherland's, and in that small fraction of a second the wonderful, nervous, tenuous hand had slipped into it and out. And the hand was now clutching firmly and surely a mass of tiny parcels that held hundreds of diamonds.

The diamond cabinet of a wholesaler is never a particularly bulky piece of furniture It stands on high legs so that the examiners, in their frequent visits to it, can take the stock in and out without stooping. Its drawers as a rule are narrow and shallow, for very little space is required to hold the entire stock of even the greatest dealer in the street. There were three of these drawers in Tessler's cabinet, and Blondy had opened the bottom one, for, as she was shorter than the average man, it had been at the best height for her to handle. A drawer so light and so well balanced had required only the slight pull of a finger to open. It had taken not much more than a single movement of her hand to open the drawer, to grasp the parcels of stones and to close it. It was the clutching of the parcels that required the most dexterity. Compared to that, the opening and closing of the drawer was fairly simple. The falling of a single parcel to the floor would have betrayed her. She could not have stooped to recover it, and in less than half an hour on the return of the examiners, it would certainly be discovered. There would be an investigation at once and the looting of the cabinet would be revealed.

But now Blondy felt a thrill of success. The worst of her fears were over, for the hardest part of her task had been accomplished. As she came to Tessler's door, she cast a look behind her. For an instant Sutherland's eyes regarded her listlessly. Then he bent his head over his work. Of what had happened at the cabinet he had seen nothing at all.

CHAPTER IV.

SHIFTED ENVELOPES.

ALONE in Tessler's room Blondy seated herself at her desk and dropped the parcels of diamonds into her lap. A few moments she devoted to a hasty scrutiny of the memoranda penned on their white tissue coverings. These notations would have been unintelligible to her a few days before, but her work as Tessler's stenographer had been initiating her rapidly into the

methods of the jewel trade. She knew now, for example, that a parcel marked "10-4gr" contained ten one-carat stones, and she knew, too, that in estimating the value of diamonds not only weight was to be considered but color and quality. Enough of a description of the jewels was penned on the parcels to convince her that they were worth a great deal more than she had expected —hundreds of thousands of dollars perhaps. At any rate it was a treasure rich enough to quicken her pulses with thrills of ecstasy. It seemed like a dream.

But it was one thing to have this treasure in her possession now, and quite another to get it out of Tessler's offices. It was the ingenious mind of Blanche Markoe that had solved the hardest part of the problem. If their plans worked smoothly, the stones would be on their way uptown long before the discovery of their disappearance. In the meantime Blondy felt that the office was going to remain in blissful ignorance of what had happened. She had taken pains to assure herself that the two examiners had completed, that morning, their work with the contents of the drawer she had robbed. It was scarcely likely to be opened again until the checking up of the stock toward the close of the day. The longer the office remained unaware of the loss the better, yet she was not worrying particularly about how soon it might be found out. The drawer wouldn't be opened until the return of the examiners, anyway.

And before their return a man would call to repair the typewriter. To be sure, Blondy's message, which she had spoken so distinctly within the hearing of her employer, had failed to go over the wire, yet she was quite certain the man would arrive. Only he was coming from Blanche Markoe instead of from the typewriter company.

The office was very still. The ticking of the big bronze clock in Tessler's corner sounded distinctly through the room. It was six minutes after one. At one thirty the examiners were due. For twenty-four minutes there was no possibility that the peace of the establistment would be broken by the discovery that a thief had been at work. In nine minutes the typewriter man should appear. He was scarcely likely to be late, for he would understand the importance of getting there on the dot. He could be relied upon absolutely, according to Blanche Markoe, who had described him to Blondy as "a poor dumb-bell" who would expect no more than a few dollars for the part he was to play.

From the drawer of her desk Blondy took a long Manila envelope and filled it with the parcels of diamonds. After sealing it, she tucked it securely into the back of the typewriter. In this particular make of machine, there was a space between the type case and the cylinder's running bars that concealed the bulky envelope from ordinary observation. A few moments later she heard somebody coming from the vestibule, but, glancing through the open door of the room, she observed that it was not the stranger she had expected but Tessler.

The diamond dealer, a fat little man whose round, bald head was set very close to his square shoulders, came in at once to his desk and turned a sharp look of inquiry on his stenographer as he paused beside his chair to light a cigar. "Got your machine fixed?" he asked.

"No; and I can't do anything with it at all," she answered petulantly. "I wish that man would come."

"They never come when they say they will," Tessler mumbled with a shrug of his shoulders.

A moment later Blondy rose from her chair and stepped toward the open door. The clerk had come out from

the little nook where he kept watch over the vestibule and was admitting somebody to the main room. "Maybe that's him now," she said to Tessler.

It was well for her that at that instant her back was turned to her employer and that therefore he failed to observe the startled look that flashed into her face. For a moment she stood rigid, as if a nervous shock had suddenly paralyzed every muscle in her body. For, standing hat in hand just inside the door from the vestibule, was Limpy Looey.

The clerk was coming toward her. "It's the man you sent for to fix your typewriter," he announced.

She started to speak, but her voice stuck in her throat. The discovery she had just made had thrown her mind into wild confusion. So this was the "poor dumb-bell" Blanche Markoe had sent, the man who could be relied upon absolutely and who would expect only a few dollars for his trouble. It was plain as day that if Mrs. Markoe and Limpy Looey, the double crosser, were working together Blondy was going to be the "goat." She could see the whole plot now. The diamonds and Mrs. Markoe and Limpy Looey would all disappear together. She had been duped.

"Oh, all—all right!" she stammered, turning back to her desk. She was thinking rapidly. She had only a few seconds to come to a decision.

"Shall I bring him in?" the clerk asked.

"Yeah, bring him in!" exclaimed Tessler impatiently. "And hurry up about it."

When presently a tall, round-shouldered man with a barely perceptible limp entered the room, carrying what appeared to be a small tool bag, the stenographer was sitting at her typewriter. She had recovered her composure and was ready to play her part in the short skit they were about to present for the diamond dealer's benefit.

"I'm sure I don't know what's the matter with it," she said, as Limpy drew nearer. "Every few letters the cylinder stops."

Limpy Looey frowned. He bent over the machine and tapped the keys with clumsy fingers. Then he began to try various curious experiments with the works. What he didn't know about typewriters would have filled a large volume and Blondy could see that he was rapidly putting hers completely out of business.

"Why, this machine'll have to go to the shop," he announced after a few moments. "It's all to the bad. I can't do anything with it here."

"But I can't get along without a typewriter!" Blondy protested.

Limpy hastened to reassure her. "That'll be all right, miss," he said. "I'll have another one sent around for you to use till yours is fixed. It'll take a coupla days to put this in shape."

Blondy gave a despairing sigh. "Half you men don't know your business," she complained irritably. "I'll bet I could fix it right now if I knew anything about repairing. If there's anything I hate it's using a machine I'm not used to." She turned to her employer. "Mr. Tessler, this man says he's got to take the machine away and send another one."

As he had no business of importance that afternoon for his stenographer, Tessler was not interested. He gave a grunt and continued his perusal of a trade journal.

"I suppose I'll have to stand for it then," said Blondy with a shrug of annoyance as she put the cover over the typewriter. "Don't forget to send another machine around just as quick as you can."

So Limpy hoisted the typewriter to his shoulder, picked up his bag of tools and went out. The stenographer's eyes

watched him steadily until he had crossed the big adjoining room and had disappeared into the vestibule. Then for a moment a mere shadow of a smile hovered on her lips. She had just done some double crossing herself and she felt that she had made a beginning at evening the score with Limpy Looey. For the big envelope that was now being carried away in the typewriter was empty, while the one that contained the diamonds was tucked safely out of sight under her dress.

What she was going to do with the stones was not yet clear in her mind, but it was evident she would have to dispose of them somewhere before closing time. She might ask Tessler to allow her to go out and see a friend or to do some shopping and then find some place to conceal them. However, the request would be unusual and would surely draw suspicion upon her later. As soon as the loss was discovered, the office rooms would be searched thoroughly. There was no possibility of hiding them there. And when a few moments later the two examiners returned from lunch, she realized there was scarcely a chance that she would be able to return them to the cabinet. These two men were sharply observant. If she should step out into their room, their eyes would be fastened on her at once. And then there was Tessler himself who was as sly and watchful as a rat. To fit the parcels back into their position in the drawer so they would not wedge and prevent it from closing she would be compelled to carry them in a bulky and conspicuous handful. Her little forehead puckered into a troubled frown as she began to understand the seriousness of her situation.

Tessler looked up presently from his trade paper. "I guess I better dictate what letters I've got in mind," he decided, "and then you can type 'em and send 'em out after you get a machine."

The announcement filled her with alarm, for there could be no telling how long he might keep her engaged. It was also by no means certain that the disappearance of the stones would not be discovered long before the check-up. But her wits failed her in this emergency, and dutifully she drew out her pad and seated herself beside her employer's desk.

For more than an hour, while Blondy's nerves were on edge, the diamond dealer continued to dictate. And then suddenly Bannard, one of the two examiners, appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. Tessler!" he exclaimed.

Blondy glanced up at the man and her blood turned cold. His agitated manner and the unusual seriousness of his face told her at once that he had opened the bottom drawer of the cabinet.

Tessler, all nerves, sensed the situation immediately, and sprang up from his chair trembling. "Well, don't stand there staring at me like that!" he cried shrilly. "Spit it out. What's happened?"

"Some of the stock is missing," Bannard announced hoarsely. "It's been taken from the cabinet."

"How much?" The importer's round, pudgy face had turned white.

"I don't know yet," the man answered with an effort to steady his voice. "A good deal. Twenty or thirty parcels. Perhaps more."

"You're crazy," shrieked Tessler. "It's impossible!"

"That's just what I told myself," Bannard muttered weakly. "But the stones are gone all right."

Tessler rushed outside and looked into the looted drawer. "You were working with the stuff in here all morning," he cried.

"Almost up to the time I went out to lunch," said Bannard. "So the stones were taken while I was out."

The importer shot a look of fury and

suspicion at old Sutherland, who had come tottering over from his desk at the other end of the room. "Well? What have you got to say about this?" Tessler demanded, confronting his bookkeeper savagely. "You were supposed to be here while these men were out. And I'll bet that some of the time you weren't here. I'll bet you went out and left this room empty."

Sutherland's wrinkled face flushed with mortification and he raised a trembling hand to protest. "You—you have no right to accuse me of such carelessness, sir!" he stammered angrily. "I have been in this street for forty years with a stainless record. This is the first time in my life that I have been charged with such a thing. I was at my desk every moment of the time the examiners were out."

"Then you must have dropped asleep," Tessler yelled. "You're getting too old. You can't tell me that cabinet could be robbed while you were sitting wide awake at your desk."

The bookkeeper was on the verge of tears. He winced and shrank back as if his employer had struck him. "I never fell asleep during office hours in my life, sir," he muttered faintly. "I can assure you that nobody went to that cabinet while I was here. The stones must have been taken while I was at lunch."

"The examiners were here all the time you were at lunch," the importer reminded him with a sneer. "And I was in my room with the door open. It's easier to believe the stuff was taken while you were here alone than after the three of us got here. Check up, Bannard, and find out what's missing. This thing has got me cuckoo. I can't understand it.

Tessler stepped quickly into his room, went to the telephone and called the number of the protective union's detective agency. "Is Wilson there?" he demanded sharply after a moment. "Yeah? Put him on the wire quick." And then, "Hey, Billy! This is Herman Tessler. Some crook's just made a big clean-up here. No, don't ask no questions till you get here. And come fast."

For a moment it seemed to Blondy that her heart had stopped beating. And then it began to pound furiously. Wilson! He was the tall, lean, red-haired, whispering man who had been getting on her nerves ever since she had been in the importer's employ. At this ticklish time, he was the last person in the world she would have cared to see coming into the office. Realizing that nobody in the place was going to be free from suspicion, she knew that to save herself from prison she must somehow get rid of the stones before his arrival.

As Tessler stepped out into the adjoining room, where Bannard was feverishly pulling stock out of the cabinet for his check-up, she looked around frantically for a place that might conceal the bulky, jewel-filled envelope from the thorough search which she knew would soon be made of the office. But nowhere was there a hiding spot that suggested itself as likely to escape investigation.

Desperate, she turned presently to the window, which on this warm summer afternoon was wide open. Though it was six stories above the ground, it was protected by heavy iron bars, fastened horizontally three or four inches apart. She was tempted to throw the envelope down into the little courtyard, which was hemmed in completely by the rear walls of buildings. But after a moment she considered that if it should be found there, either by Wilson or somebody honest enough to return it, as it probably would be, neither Wilson nor Tessler would have to do very much hard thinking before arriving at the conclusion that she herself had dropped it there. The facts of the

situation would all point in her direction. And Blondy, though she had come to the office well recommended by Rosie Klein, her predecessor, knew that neither her character nor her reputation would bear much investigation. Once under suspicion, the dangers that now treatened her would increase rapidly.

But what else could she do? she asked herself in panic. It was agonizing to realize she had a fortune in her possession—enough jewels to make her a rich woman—and that she must part with it forever because there was not even a hiding place for an envelope. However, it would be better to lose all this wealth than to go to prison.

She was about to toss the envelope through the bars, for her nerves were jumping with the fear that Tessler would come back into the room presently, when the tin water pipe that drained the roof caught her attention. It ran by close to the edge of the window and was within easy reach. It would have meant nothing to her in this crucial moment if it had not been for the fact that it was old and battered and that close to where she stood, rust had eaten a long slit into it.

Suddenly inspiration rushed into her troubled mind. After glancing behind her to reassure herself that she was not being observed, she pulled the envelope from her dress, reached out between the bars and jammed it through the hole in the pipe.

A wave of relief swept over her as she saw the treasure, which had seemed so eager to accuse her, disappear. She could hear it fluttering and scraping and bumping in the pipe as it fell down and down. The next moment she peered below. Close to the cement floor of the court the pipe turned with a sharp angle, its mouth jutting out two or three feet from the wall, where it emptied the water of rains and melting snows into the cement, which sloped down to a little round iron grating in the center of the court, where the drainage found its outlet. There were no melting snows now, for it was summer; neither had there been any rain for several days, and the court was dry.

It was not only relief from fear that thrilled her as she drew back from the window and returned to her desk. The angle in the pipe had saved the envelope from passing through to the floor of the court. The Manila paper was stiff and strong. It would be held at the angle safe from prying eyes, and once more the hope of sudden wealth filled her thoughts.

CHAPTER V.

THE ROOM WITH THE CHAINED DOOR.

THE portly chief of the protective union's detective bureau, Mat Hesterberg, was fond of remarking that it wasn't Whispering Wilson's head that solved problems but his legs. And Wilson himself, being a modest man, sometimes admitted that he guessed Mat was about right in this conclusion.

"Herman, the only way to get a crook is to keep moving round looking for him," the red-headed guardian of Maiden Lane had once said to Tessler. "I let Mat sit in his swivel chair doing all the deducing and theorizing and deep thinking, and I go out and do the hunting. Mat's a bright thinker and I'm a good walker. While he's doing the brainwork on the big problem, I'm doing the footwork, and sometimes I beat him to the answer."

But Tessler had long ago discovered that Wilson, though he often seemed to succeed merely through dogged routine perseverance, had a mind of his own, and that he could think just as rapidly and effectively as his chief.

The importer and his employees were in a state of high nervous tension when Whispering Wilson arrived. Poor old Sutherland had dropped quivering into

the chair at his desk to nurse the wounds of humiliation. The two jewel examiners and the young clerk were arguing desperately with their excited and angry chief in an effort to prove that their vigilance had been beyond criticism. In the private room Blondy McBride was fluttering restlessly about worrying over what was going to happen next.

"Wilson, I'm so cuckoo I dunno whether I'm standing on my feet or my head," Tessler wailed as the detective slouched in. "Some of the best stones in my stock gone! And business going from bad to worse all the year. Nothing but bad luck. I guess I better go down and jump in the river."

Wilson understood the importer's emotional nature thoroughly. "All right, Herman," came his hoarse whisper. "G'wan down and jump in if you wanta. You wouldn't sink. You're too fat. And by the time they fished you out maybe you'd have some sense. You're insured, ain't you? So what you worrying about?"

"Insured!" screamed Tessler. "A lot you know about the diamond business. Those stones cost me more'n a hundred thousand dollars, and how about all the profit I was going to make on 'em? Insurance doesn't cover that."

For a few minutes Wilson stood listening to the diamond dealer's story of what had happened. Presently he rubbed a hand over his close-cropped red hair in deep perplexity. "I guess you must have stole 'em yourself, Herman," he whispered.

Tessler jumped as if a bee had stung him. A good many dealers in Maiden Lane had been robbing themselves to collect insurance recently, and it was a subject on which this harassed importer at such a time as this had good reason to be extremely sensitive. Such an inexplicable disappearance of his stock was not unlikely to place him under suspicion. "Now, looka here, Billy, don't pull no joke like that," he pleaded. "If the trade got a notion I was one of them crooked insurance grafters where'd I be? My business would go flooey. I gotta find that crook that's robbed me if I have to spend my life on the job. I got a good name at stake."

With a grin, Wilson turned away to question the employees, and he soon discovered one fact which Tessler had forgotten to mention—the visit of the man who had taken the typewriter away. This bit of information threw him into deep abstraction. For some time he remained silent, rubbing his fingers over his hair and screwing up his forehead. At last, glancing through Tessler's private door, he caught sight of the stenographer, and he went slouching into the room to talk with her.

As she discovered this man she dreaded moving portentously in her direction, Blondy became as nervous as a rabbit, but with a desperate effort she steeled herself for the encounter.

"Never saw you here till a few days ago," he whispered, fastening his pale-blue eyes upon her steadily. "Where'd you work before?"

"Me? I—I didn't work anywhere before—in this town," she stammered. "My last job was in Chicago."

"You telephoned for that repair man?"

"I sure did. You go and ask Mr. Tessler. He heard me telephoning the company's office."

Wilson was merely beating about for an idea. As yet he scarcely suspected the typewriter repairer, for it seemed impossible that the man could have robbed the cabinet while so many employees were on guard. He did suspect, however, that it had been an inside job. How could it have been anything else, he asked himself, if the repair man was the only outsider who had been in the rooms?

"If I bring a matron from the agency around here, I s'pose you won't have any objection to being searched," he suggested. "Customary in cases like this. You oughta be glad of the chance of clearing yourself of any possible suspicion."

"Sure," Blondy agreed. "Bring her round. "I wouldn't want anybody to think for a minute that I'd do such a thing as steal diamonds."

Tessler, coming in from the other room in time to overhear this part of the conversation, announced that everybody in the place would have to be searched. "And me, too," he added. "I guess, if I'm willing to stand for it myself, nobody else has got any right to object."

But the repair man was once more absorbing Wilson's thoughts. He had found it hard to believe that one of the employees of the place could be guilty, for the suggestion of a search had failed to disturb the stenographer in the least. Moreover, not one of the men here was so inexperienced in the ways of Maiden Lane that he could have calculated he would have a chance of getting out of the office with the stones in his possession. After asking the stenographer for the number of the typewriter company, he turned to the telephone. In a few moments he had learned over the wire not only that no repair man had been sent to Tessler's office but that no request for one had been received. Promptly he reported this information to Tessler.

"But didn't I hear her myself calling the company up and telling 'em?" the importer protested with a shrug of his shoulders. "They must be boneheads up in that office. If they didn't get the call how'd the typewriter fella get here?"

"It looks to me like some crook might have happened to cut in on the wire," said Wilson. "If he got that message and knew what kind of an office this is, he might have seen a chance to make a haul."

"You're crazy!" cried Tessler. "Even if that fella was a crook, he couldn't have got his hands into that cabinet. My clerk was showing him in here, and going out he was holding the machine on his shoulder with one hand and carrying his tool bag with the other."

Again Wilson called up the typewriter office. He got the head of the repair department, and after talking with him long and earnestly was convinced that the man had not come from the company. Incidentally he got the number of Tessler's machine. Then he called his own office, told Mat Hesterberg to send a man and a woman around to search Tessler's staff and the rooms, and informed the importer that he was going out to do some leg work.

In the lobby, down on the street floor, Wilson found Doran, the watchman. "Doran, a man came out of here with a typewriter on his shoulder a couple of hours ago," he whispered. "Did you see him?"

"Sure I seen him," the watchman answered. "A tall, thin fella. What of it? Did he swipe the machine?"

"Maybe. Anyhow I've got to find him. Did you notice which way he went?"

"He got into a taxicab. You take a look round the block and maybe you can find the driver now. He hangs round here most of the time when he's not got a fare. You'll know him by the wart on the side of his nose."

Wilson's spirits rose. It seemed to him now that the mystery of the disappearance of Tessler's jewels was going to be solved quickly and easily. The repair man had evidently been an impostor, and now that he was in such a fair way of getting on his trail, the case looked simple. It took some time, however, to find the driver of the cab, and then the man's story was not particularly encouraging. The fare with

the typewriter had given no house address but had directed to be driven to the corner of Tenth Street and Third Avenue.

For a few moments Wilson pondered over this information. "I guess you better take me up there and show me just where you let him out and which way he went," he decided. Undoubtedly, the driver's account of his observations, as his fare with the typewriter arrived at his destination, had been a little hazy.

Arriving at the junction of the two thoroughfares the driver had named, the cab, running eastward, crossed Third Avenue and continued to roll along Tenth Street. When it stopped, it had left the avenue almost half a block behind.

"This is the very spot where I left him," the driver declared. "When he got out and hoisted the typewriter to his shoulder I thought he must be going into this door here that he'd told me to stop at, but the last I seen of him he was walking toward Second Avenue. I thought it was kind of funny that a fella with a heavy machine to carry had told me to stop here when it wasn't the place he wanted to get to. If he hadn't given me a quarter tip, I'd have figured he was a tightwad who'd been afraid the meter'd jump another nickel."

As the cab moved away, Wilson proceeded to walk slowly toward Second Avenue, pausing now and then to ask children playing in the street if they had seen a man with a typewriter on his shoulder. By the time he got to Second Avenue, the trail seemed to be petering out. But at a hazard he turned north in the avenue. He intended, after going a block or two, to return to Tenth Street if he had found no clew to where the man had gone and try one of the other two directions. Presently a small girl wheeling a baby carriage was able to inform him that she had seen a man early that afternoon carrying a typewriter into a house around the corner in Twelfth Street. Her description of him fitted the impostor who had taken the machine from Tessler's office. Thereupon, the gloom that had been gathering in the baffled mind of Whispering Wilson, melted away like mist in the sun.

It was a shabby rooming house which the little girl presently pointed out to him, and as he observed its sign displayed conspicuously beside the door, his confidence grew. Experience had taught him long ago that cheap rooming houses were always promising places in which to hunt for men and women at odds with the law. The professional thief is a homeless creature, a wanderer, ready to pack up and move at a moment's notice. He abhors the sociability and the regular meal hours of boarding houses and he eats in restaurants.

The woman, who opened the door a few inches and peered out at him cautiously soon after he had pressed the bell, was evidently the landlady. She was typical of her class. Suspicion seemed to be a permanent characteristic of her cold, gray eyes, and her pinched face was bitter. Hers was a disillusioned world where no human being was to be trusted. As soon as she appeared he foresaw difficulties, and he made up his mind to resort to artifice.

"I've come for the typewriter," he informed her in a cracked whisper.

"Then you've come to the wrong place," the woman said sharply. "There ain't any typewriters here at all."

She was about to slam the door in his face when he thrust a foot forward against it. "Hold on!" he pleaded. "Let me explain. There's a man here that's just got a machine and it's out of order. He asked me to come and bring it to my shop for repairs. He told me the number of the house, but I forgot to ask him his name. A tall, slim fella with a little bit of a limp."

For a few seconds the landlady's hard, cynical eyes studied the caller's face steadily. "All right," she decided sourly. "I guess it's Miller you want. He's up on the third floor back. Last door on your right."

She went shuffling back into the rear of the house, and Wilson proceeded to climb the stairs. After passing softly through a dim, narrow hallway on the third floor, he came to the door which he had been told was Miller's. He stood still for a few moments, listening. From the room came an indistinct sound of voices—a man's and a woman's. However, the door was closed tightly, and he failed to grasp enough of the conversation to get any meaning out of it. It was not a cheerful sound. There was a note of anger running through it. The woman's shrill petulance and her companion's savage grumbling indicated that they were not on amiable terms.

Stooping low, Wilson peered into the thin slit between the door and the jamb, and, failing to discover the bolt of the lock there, concluded that he could push his way in unannounced. Suddenly he turned the knob.

The door opened for a space not quite wide enough to admit him, then abruptly stopped. A chain on the inside was holding it securely. At the same instant the woman screamed.

"Shut up, you fool!" her companion shouted at her. He stepped quickly to the door, and, yelling "Get out of here!" at the unwelcome caller, attempted to close it. But Wilson's weight held it tight against the chain.

"Whatcha want?" the man inside demanded. Evidently unwilling to show himself, he was standing where he could not be seen through the aperture, but Wilson had already caught a fleeting glimpse of both him and the woman. He had observed that the man was tall and slender and that he moved with a slight limp, and that his companion was a handsome brunette. Though for only a fraction of a second had she been within range of his eyes, her face recalled dim memories. Then her name had slipped into his mind—Blanche Markoe! It was the same Blanche Markoe who, a few years before, had persuaded a Maiden Lane firm into letting her sell for them on memorandum. She had disappeared with stones worth a snug little fortune.

"Take the chain off, Miller," whispered Wilson. "I want to have a talk with you."

"Limpy, don't you let him fool you!" the woman screamed hysterically.

There was a moment of silence. Then Wilson heard a window sliding. Instantly he threw himself with all his force against the door, but the chain held. Judging from the sounds that came to him, he was quite certain Miller and the woman were getting out of the window. Again he made a lunge at the door, and the chain seemed to give a trifle—just enough to encourage him to another effort to force it instead of running down the stairs. At his third attempt, the screws holding a clamp of the chain to the jamb were forced out, and the door swung open wide.

When Wilson sprang into the room, Miller and the woman were gone. A breeze sweeping in from the open window rustled the torn remnants of a Manila envelope lying on the floor beside a chair on which stood a typewriter. Running to the window, he discovered a fire escape which led down into a small yard. The two fugitives, after swinging down the iron ladders, were now, with the assistance of a board propped against the back fence, climbing over into the yard of a house on the other side of the block.

Promptly giving chase, Wilson clambered down the fire escape, crossed the two yards, and rushed into the basement of the house where they had dis-

appeared He emerged into the next street just in time to see them jumping into a taxicab at the corner of Second Avenue. The cab turned east, and in a moment passed out of sight.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MAN FROM THE ROOFS.

OF Herman Tessler's office employees, the only one who escaped the frantic diamond dealer's censure was Blondy McBride. With bitter words he poured his wrath upon old Sutherland, the two examiners and the young clerk. He held every one of them to blame for inexcusable carelessness. His stenographer seemed to escape his displeasure merely because the guarding of the stock had never been a part of her duties. She was not supposed to know anything about it. Moreover, her work was confined to a room where she could hardly have been held responsible for anything that might happen to her employer's treasures. But, though he was not quite convinced that the man who had taken the typewriter could have succeeded in getting his hands on the missing stones, some thief had certainly been at the cabinet and had escaped the vigilance of the staff. What other explanation of the robbery could there be than that one of the male employees had failed to observe the ordinary rules of the establishment?

If Tessler had suspected any of his office force of robbing him, the suspicion failed to survive through the thorough investigation conducted by Mat Hesterberg. Everybody in the place was searched, and the rooms were ransacked in every nook and corner. But, even when it became certain that the stones had been taken away, Hesterberg regarded Blondy doubtfully. When he learned, however, that she had been recommended by Rosie Klein, her predecessor, he seemed to lose interest in her. He might have taken the trouble to have a talk with Rosie about the girl. But the former stenographer, who had given up her job to get married, was away on a honeymoon trip and nobody knew where she had gone.

When at last the trying ordeal was over, and Blondy left the office, she was in a fever of excitement. She alone knew where Tessler's missing jewels were, and ambition thrilled her. As she passed through the surging rush-hour crowds of Maiden Lane, she told herself that if she could only keep her courage up, her wits would presently win her a fortune. She thought of Jimmie Dell, for whom even a few dollars might mean a sure get-away from the reaching arm of the law, and her lips tightened.

From the window of Tessler's private room, she had noticed that the rear wall of an old brick building, fronting on Nassau Street, was one of the boundaries of the little court where the missing diamonds now lay hidden in the bottom of the drainpipe. A little investigation, now that she was out of the office, revealed the fact that the street floor of the old building was occupied by a stationer's store. This extended through to the court. The stationer's business had grown too big for the space he occupied. Tables, shelf-racks, counters, and high piles of stock that reached almost to the ceiling crowded the shabby old place. Steady streams of customers were squeezing their way in and out. She stepped inside, wandered about through the narrow passageways for a few moments with sharply observant eyes, and finally bought a pad. When she returned to the street, she felt sure she had solved the problem of how to recover Tessler's diamonds. Already, with the eyes of imagination, she could see herself and Jimmie Dell living in luxury in some far-away place safe from the black, menacing shadow of the law.

It was beginning to rain, and she quickened her steps. She was ready to return to Mamie Costello's house now. Before long she and Mamie, the only friend she dared trust, could talk over the strange events that had just taken place in the office of the diamond dealer.

Mamie Costello's experience with the shady side of life had been long and varied and the record of her younger days was filed away at police headquarters. Still, she had never dared to venture into that street of thrills and terrors —Maiden Lane. That was a hunting ground reserved for only the classiest of thieves, and she had never aspired to rise above the pikers. The plot to rob Tessler had startled and troubled her. It seemed like altogether too big a job for a youngster of Blondy's limited experience to handle. As a matter of fact, it was too big a job for anybody except, perhaps, some underworld aristocrat with a mind capable of coping with the bewildering dangers of the wholesale jewel market.

What she learned from Blondy that evening troubled her even more. "Kid, you better quit right now," she declared to the girl. "You're heading yourself straight to prison. Don't you get it in your bean that you can buck the game down there now that they're wise to what's happened."

But Blondy was not to be persuaded into abandoning her hope of sudden wealth. "Mamie, I've got Jimmie on my mind," she reminded her. "That's why I've got to get out of the piking class. I need big money, and I need it quick. I've heard Shaddock's getting worse. If he dies, Jimmie'll have to beat it off a long ways from here to be safe."

"Kid, be sensible," Mamie pleaded. "You don't know Maiden Lane. I do. I've heard a thousand stories about it from the old-timers. And I've never known a guy yet, who ever tried to buck that street, and got away with any swag."

"I pretty near got away with it," said Blondy. "You just wait and see. The stuff's down there waiting for me, and it'll stay there till I'm ready to lift it."

"You ain't going back to that office, are you?" Mamie cried.

"Of course I am," the girl answered. "They don't suspect me at all yet. If I didn't show up there to-morrow, they'd start hunting for me quick."

Later Blondy, alone in her room, was standing at the open window staring out into the night, her little forehead puckering with deep thought. The river was lost in inky blackness, and whistles were shrieking incessantly, for the harbor traffic was feeling its way through heavy rain and blinding mists. The street was deserted, and its drenched pavements gleamed like polished ebony. It was almost midnight.

Though the storm was beating down in such a torrent that the streets for blocks around were empty of people, a man had stolen into the narrow alley half a block from Mamie Costello's house. He had ventured into a neighborhood which he knew was full of danger for him. However, he felt that on such a black, lonely, rain-swept night as this, he would be scarcely likely to attract attention. Cautiously, he made his way to a point where a fire escape hung a few feet above his head.

He was short and slender, but even if he had been as tall as a circus giant, he couldn't have reached the lowest ladder. But he had come prepared for such a difficulty. From under his rain-soaked coat, he pulled a coil of rope, an end of which was fastened to an iron hook. He threw the hook up against the ladder and it caught on the lowest rung. In the rope were several knots, perhaps two feet apart. He had tied them there that he might have a firmer hold when the time came to pull himself up to the ladder.

The next moment he was climbing up the rope like a sailor. When he got to the fire escape he released the hook, pulled up the rope and left it lying on the first platform. Then he proceeded to ascend the ladders, and presently was on the flat roof of the building.

There was scarcely need now of caution. In the dense darkness and the heavy rain, he could not have been seen from even a few steps away, and the slight sound made by his feet, as he crossed the sanded tar, was lost in the roar of the storm.

Across the housetops he moved like a shadow. A few moments, and he found himself on the roof of Mamie Costello's house. The door of the hatch was unlocked, as Mamie had promised days ago that it would be, and he pushed it open and stepped softly into the staircase.

Except for the snoring of some lodger on the top floor, the house was silent. It was so late that he was afraid he might have to knock loudly on Blondy McBride's door in order to wake her.

But his whisper at the keyhole brought an answer at once.

"Oh, Jimmie!" came Blondy's gasping cry as she pulled the door open.

He looked like only the wreck of a man. His clothes, from which water was trickling steadily to the floor, hung like limp rags. On his emaciated face was a week's growth of dark beard, and a feverish light burned in his sunken eyes.

"You look awful!" Blondy cried as he sank wearily into a chair. "I'll bet you haven't even had enough to eat."

"You said it," he admitted. "I've been close to starving. Too scared to try to find work anywheres. Been sleeping in coal yards and lumber piles. I thought that maybe Shaddock was dead, and I've been hiding like a rat. Sometimes I didn't even have nerve enough to get out in the streets to hunt for something to eat. It's drove me pretty near crazy."

Blondy ran to her dilapidated bureau, and from a drawer pulled out a roll of money. "Take it, Jimmie!" she cried. "It's close to a hundred dollars and it'll keep you going a long time."

Jimmie shrank back from her. Somehow through all his troubles his conscience, though it was weakening fast, had managed to survive. "Gee, kid! I can't!" he muttered. "You've lifted that stuff from somebody. I guess I'm about desperate enough to go crooked myself now, but I'm not quite that low—not low enough to live on what you've stole. Oh, kid! I wish you hadn't gone back to the crooked work. It's got me scared. And it won't do me no good because I won't take nothing from you—not till you go straight, anyhow."

Blondy's pleas failed to break his resolution. "Stop it, will you, Blondy?" he cried at last. "If you keep on talking like that, I'm liable to weaken and take the whole roll. I'll get out of here if you don't quit. Don't you worry about me. I found half a dollar in the gutter this morning and had a square meal. I'll get along somehow."

With a sigh she turned again to the bureau and dropped the money back into the drawer.

"Listen, Jimmie," she said, as she faced him again. "I'm going to tell you something that'll open your eyes."

She proceeded to tell the story of Tessler's diamonds.

At last the hunted, penniless, desperate man sprang to his feet. He felt that he was being tempted beyond human endurance. She was offering him a chance to share a fortune. And he was starving!

"The stuff's waiting for us down at the bottom of that pipe, Jimmie," cried Blondy, throwing her arms around him and searching his face with pleading eyes. "Oh, you can't say no. You've

got to help me get it, Jimmie! We're going to be rich, happy, and safe!"

Jimmie gritted his teeth. Rich, happy and safe! And he had been living like a rat! In that moment his troublesome conscience failed to whisper to him.

CHAPTER VII.

BLONDY EVENS A SCORE.

THOUGH they were smarting with the bitterness of defeat, hope had not entirely abandoned either Limpy Looey or Blanche Markoe. The discovery that the envelope they pulled from the typewriter was empty instead of being full of diamonds, as they had expected, had not only enraged but had puzzled them. They could not be quite certain whether Blondy was a double crosser or had blundered. If they had been tricked, it was difficult to understand how the girl could have expected to get the jewels out of the office. Perhaps she had not been able to get her hands on them at all, Mrs. Markoe suggested, and had not found an opportunity of informing Limpy of her failure. Yet they could not reason away the conviction that the evidence pointed to treachery.

Deciding the next day that they must discover whether the girl was still in Tessler's employ, they ventured into Maiden Lane late in the afternoon. They stationed themselves in a doorway which commanded a view of the front of the building where the diamond importer conducted his business. The milling crowds in the narrow street gave them a feeling of safety. The deep doorway shielded them from observation, and they could pass out into the steady stream of passers-by without attracting attention.

A few minutes after five o'clock they caught sight of Blondy. She came out of Tessler's building alone and evidently in a hurry. Limpy and his companion came out of the doorway and proceeded to follow her. The girl turned east. As she rounded the corner into Nassau Street, a bedraggled young man squeezed his way through the crowd and joined her.

Limpy gave a start. "It's that bird Jimmie Dell!" he exclaimed under his breath.

"Jimmie Dell? Who's he?" whispered Mrs. Markoe, who was picking her way cautiously to avoid danger of being discovered by Blondy.

Limpy, though he had long been under the spell of Mrs. Markoe's charms, had never revealed to her the secret of the Shaddock case. "He's a simp the bulls are after for beaning an old guy and taking his roll," he answered. "What he's doing down here with that skirt beside him has got me guessing. I never knew he had brains or nerve enough to try anything big."

The next moment Blondy and her companion turned into the stationer's where she had bought the pad on the day before. Immediately, Blanche Markoe and Limpy crossed to the other side of the street from the store where they could command a better view of its door.

"This don't look like either of 'em could have much on their minds," Limpy observed with a troubled frown. "If they was up to something phony, they wouldn't be wasting any time buying stationery. It looks to me, Blanche, like the kid hadn't found a chance to lift the rocks yet. If she had 'em, she wouldn't have gone back to her job at Tessler's, would she? If she was wise, she'd be beating it out o' town fast. By now she'd be a thousand miles from here."

"I don't like the idea of us being around here at all," Mrs. Markoe murmured nervously. "There's too much risk of running into that red-headed old bimbo that chased us yesterday. He's got a mean disposition, that bird has, and I've heard he sticks to a trail

like a bloodhound. I'd rather have a headquarters bull after me any day."

Ten or fifteen minutes passed, and neither Blondy nor her companion had reappeared. Limpy and Mrs. Markoe were deeply puzzled.

"What can be keeping 'em?" the woman asked with a shrug of irritation. "They've had time to buy all the stuff in the store. It's lucky for us the rain's stopped."

Time dragged on. The street crowds were thinning out, for the rush hour, following the closing of the downtown offices, was almost gone. And still they waited for Blondy and Jimmie to come out of the store.

"What this means is too deep for me," Mrs. Markoe remarked with a sigh. "It can't be possible we've missed 'em. I've seen everybody that's come out of that door. D'you s'pose there can be a way out the back?"

"You can betcha life there ain't," said Limpy. "I know that block. It's built up pretty solid. There's no alleys running through it. Maybe they could sneak into some other building by the rear if they tried hard enough, but what would be the big idea? They don't know we're trailing 'em."

With dogged persistence they continued their watch on the store. After a time all but one or two of its lights, which had been burning all through this dark, cloudy day, went out. A few moments later a man who might have been the proprietor or a clerk emerged into the street, locked the door and went away.

"So that's that," said Mrs. Markoe with a bewidered look at her companion.. "They've sneaked out on us somehow. Hard luck is certainly sticking to me like a bur."

"I guess we might as well travel along," Limpy decided with a dejected sigh.

Mrs. Markoe hesitated. Suddenly an idea seemed to have developed in her bewildered mind. "Hold on!" she cried. "I've got a hunch they've found a way of sneaking into Tessler's building through the rear. Maybe they're waiting in there somewhere till dark."

"For what?" asked Limpy incredulously.

"Why, to get their hands on the stones. She may have hidden 'em where she can't get 'em when people are around."

"You've sure got a fine imagination, Blanche," said Limpy with a sneer. "Come on and forget it. You talk like you was cuckoo."

But Blanche Markoe was a firm believer in hunches. The street was now almost deserted, and she crossed to the other side and peered into the stationer's window.

"Limpy!" she whispered the next moment. "Look!"

Limpy put his face to the glass and caught a glimpse of the indistinct figure of Blondy McBride far back in the rear of the dimly lighted store. It was a discovery that astonished him and left him more deeply bewildered than ever. He and his companion stared blankly at one another. "Did I have the right hunch?" Mrs. Markoe whispered tauntingly.

"We gotta get away from this glass," he said quickly, "or they may see us." He drew her into the doorway of an adjoining building. Here for a few moments he pondered the situation silently. "If they're trying to get into Tessler's building, they can't get out from the front of it," he decided presently. "The street doors of them jewel-office buildings are kept locked after business hours and they've all got watchmen prowling round. They'll prob'ly come out the way they got in, so we better stay where we are."

"If that cheap, piking kid had those stones and put that empty envelope into the typewriter on purpose, she ought to have her neck wrung," remarked Mrs.

Markoe bitterly. "The idea of treating people like us that way! You and me are too high class, Limpy, to let a low-grader like her give us such a kick in the slats without doing something about it."

Limpy had already resolved to do something about it just as quickly as he got the chance, and he had a feeling now that that chance was coming very soon. He slipped a hand into one of his pockets and clutched the weapon concealed there. It wasn't a gun but a blackjack.

The narrow, high-walled street grew dark. Stiff and tired after standing so long, they stepped out of the doorway, and for a few minutes walked slowly to and fro along the block. Now and then they ran the risk of pressing close to the stationer's window to peer inside, but they did not succeed in getting another glimpse of either Blondy or her companion.

Up to now Blondy's carefully laid plan had been carried through without a hitch. She and Jimmie had found the stationer's crowded with customers. They had found it easy to slip unobserved behind a pile of packing cases in the rear of the store. Here, in a narrow space between the boxes and the wall, they remained undiscovered. The rush hour passed, and business slackened. Before long, the last customer went out. The glare of light grew dim. The one man, who had remained in charge after closing time, looked over some papers on a desk for a few moments. Then, picking up his hat, he stepped out into the street, locking the door after him.

Presently Blondy and Jimmie ventured out from their hiding place. They moved cautiously to the back door which was fastened only by a bolt on the inside. After slipping the bolt back noiselessly, they passed softly out into the little, cement-paved court.

A few scattered lights shone like stars in the high buildings around them. The sky was black with the heavy storm clouds which, all through the preceding night and the morning, had deluged the city. The court was very dark. But in their hiding place in the store, their eyes had already adjusted themselves to darkness. They could distinguish the principal features of their immediate surroundings without much difficulty. Six stories above them were the darkened windows of Tessler's offices. Presently, they could discern the dim line of the drainpipe running down against the rear wall of the building. They moved over to the point where it came down and met the paving of the court.

"We better work fast," whispered Blondy.

Jimmie slipped a hand into a pocket, pulled out a can opener and attacked the pipe just above its sharp angle. It was the work of only a few moments to cut a slit in the tin wide enough to admit his fingers. Blondy, standing beside him, was quivering with excitement. In another moment they would both be rich, and this bedraggled outcast now crouching at her feet on the pavement would know the joys of living.

"Pull it out quick, Jimmie!" she cried. "It's there all right."

"But it's not there!" he whispered hoarsely as he pulled his fingers from the hole in the pipe. "Maybe it stuck somewheres further up."

Blondy gave a gasp of dismay. "It's not—not there?" she stammered faintly. "Why, Jimmie, of course it's there. It must be."

Crouching beside him, she poked a hand through the slit in the tin. But she failed to find the jewel-laden envelope. "Oh, my stars!" she cried with a sob. "It never got down this far. My heart's broke, Jimmie. There's diamonds worth more'n a hundred thousand dollars way up above us in that

pipe somewhere, and we'll never get 'em."

For a moment the bitterness of their disappointment held them silent. Then Jimmie, staring up at the pipe, pulled his wits together.

"It rained hard all last night," he mused. "That pipe must have been full of running water that would have carried the envelope down. All that water must have swept it clear through the pipe. It's not here at all, Blondy. It's down in the sewer by this time. We better give up hoping."

In dull despair they sought the place where the water emptied from the sloping cement. Then they discovered the little, round iron grating in the sunken center of the pavement. To this grating were clinging water-soaked scraps of Manila paper.

"There's what's left of the envelope," Blondy muttered listlessly as she tried to choke back a sob.

Jimmie, hopeless but curious, discovered presently that the grating was removable. On lifting it up, he found that it had been fitted over an iron cup, now half full of water. Suddenly an inspiration flashed into his mind. He dipped his fingers into the cup, and the next moment drew a long breath of relief. "Blondy!" he cried. "They're here! A whole handful! This cup's caught 'em all."

The diamonds were certainly there—every one of them apparently, for it seemed scarcely possible that a single stone could have escaped the cup. Blondy, her misery suddenly changed to thrills of joy, was presently convinced that they had recovered the entire treasure. Her examination of the parcels, when in Tessler's private room, had given her a rough idea of the number of stones they contained. She noticed that most of the heavy-tissue wrappers, lined with oiled paper, were still holding their contents intact. A few loose stones, which had escaped from papers soaked open by the water, had been held securely with the rest by the cup.

"A hundred thousand dollars, Jimmie!" Blondy was gasping out in ecstasy as they gathered the treasure together. "A hundred thousand dollars—and more! It's easy to get the full value for diamonds. They're as good as money. And they can't be identified—not when they're out of their papers, anyhow. We're going to beat it out of this punk old town, Jimmie, quick. We're going to California. We'll live in a swell hotel, where there's an orchestra playing, palm trees waving, and a blue ocean out in front."

"Kid, we better get outa here before we talk about all that," Jimmie muttered with an anxious frown. "It's getting late, and there may be a cop snooping round outside somewheres looking for trouble."

On returning to the store they found wrapping paper and string, and, without sparing time to tear off the tissue coverings, they tied the jewels into a bundle. Then they stole cautiously to the window and peered out. The street seemed to be deserted.

The front door was locked, and less ingenious intruders would have found themselves prisoners. But Jimmie had brought with him a glass cutter and a rubber sucker which could hold a loose pane from falling. He applied the sucker to the window and quickly cut a huge hole in the glass big enough for them to squeeze through the door.

Blondy was the first to slip out to the sidewalk. Close behind her came Jimmie. Apparently the worst of their troubles were over, for there was no sign of danger.

They had taken only a few steps in their flight when Limpy Looey sprang out in front of them from a doorway. "Hand over the stuff, you poor simps!" he whispered, "or I'll bean you both. And don't you make no noise or you'll

bring a cop. I know you've got them stones all right. You wasn't spending all that time in there just for nothing."

Jimmie, driven desperate by the fear of losing the diamonds, hurled himself upon Limpy savagely. However, a blackjack is an effective weapon, and when it struck sharply on the little fugitive's head, he collapsed. At that instant Blanche Barkoe, appearing suddenly from the doorway, caught hold of Blondy.

Jimmie was lying as still as death on the walk, and Limpy, bending over him, was searching his victim's clothes. Then there came a sound of running feet. A block away a man was rushing toward them. As he came, he blew a police whistle, and the shrill alarm seemed to wake all the echoes of the lonely district.

Mrs. Markoe, releasing her hold on Blondy, started to run. But Limpy, ready to take desperate risks to get possession of the diamonds which he was convinced were almost within his grasp, hesitated a moment. And in that moment, while the whistle was continuing to sound its call for help, Blondy, seeing no hope of escape, came to a quick decision. She must get rid of the jewels. To be caught with them in her possession would mean a long term in prison.

In a final frantic effort to discover the loot before taking to his heels, Limpy was again bending over Jimmie Dell. Blondy's quick hands flew into desperate action. Never had they moved more swiftly than now. They pulled the bundle of diamonds from her dress. Then, rapidly and so dexterously that Limpy was unconscious of what they were doing, they slipped the jewels into a pocket of his coat.

The man with the whistle was now almost upon them. Not far off another whistle answered, and a policeman appeared at a corner, his shield and buttons gleaming in the light of a street lamp. Then Limpy broke into a run.

Ignoring Blondy and the helpless figure lying on the walk, the man, whose whistle had first sounded the alarm, rushed by in pursuit of Limpy and Mrs. Markoe.

For a moment Blondy, her heart beating wildly, stood watching the two pursuers closing in on the running fugitives. Then, losing sight of the chase in the dark, she realized suddenly the full extremity of Jimmie's danger. If he were caught, a charge of murder might be waiting for him. Almost hopeless, she bent over his unconscious form. "Wake up, Jimmie!" she cried, shaking him. But Jimmie did not answer. His eyes were closed. He was scarcely breathing.

Looking about for some place to which she might drag him into hiding, she discovered close by that there was a little areaway a few steps below the street level. Seizing Jimmie, she dragged him along the walk and down the steps. It was as dark as pitch here. It seemed scarcely possible that he would be observed by any passer-by.

Once more she heard running footsteps, and a policeman came into sight once more. Though she was ignorant of the fact, he was the same man whose shield and buttons she had seen gleaming in the light a few moments before. and who had joined in the chase of Limpy and Mrs. Markoe. He was looking now for the unconscious man and the flaxen-haired girl who had been left behind. Presently, he paused and scrutinized the street closely. Blondy crouched low beside her companion, and after a moment the officer passed on and out of sight.

A little later Jimmie began to show signs of life. With a groan of pain he lifted his head.

"We've got to get out of here quick," Blondy whispered to him.

With a desperate effort he caught

her hands and raised himself to his feet. Then, leaning heavily upon her, he staggered up the steps into the empty street.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHANCE TO GO STRAIGHT.

WHEN Herman Tessler arrived at his office the next morning, an hour after his employees had opened the place for business, he found Whispering Wilson waiting for him. But the flaxen-haired stenographer had not appeared.

"Where's the girl?" the red-haired detective asked in his hoarse whisper as he followed the importer into the private room.

"That's what I'd like to know," mumbled Tessler, staring at Blondy's empty chair and then turning back to the door. "Hey, Bannard! Where's that stenog?"

In the adjoining room the examiner looked up from the tiny scales on which he was weighing stones. "She hasn't come, sir," he explained. "And she hasn't sent any word, either."

"Sit down, Herman, and calm yourself," whispered Wilson as he sprawled his long, lean figure out on Blondy's chair. "My guess is that she ain't ever going to come."

"Huh? What you got on your mind?" the importer demanded irritably as he turned to his caller. "Have you really found out something about her?"

Wilson hesitated. "No—no, I guess not," he answered doubtfully. "I'm just a little suspicious, that's all. I figured I'd try to find out something about her when she left the office at closing time yesterday. I was keeping an eye on her in the street down below when I happened to get sight of two birds I was a whole lot more interested in. One of 'em was a woman named Markoe, who stung a friend of yours once, some years back."

"What!" cried Tessler shrilly. "That she-devil in this street again! Then I'll bet she was mixed up in robbing me. She oughta be boiled in oil."

"You always were a bloodthirsty fella, Herman," his caller observed. "But you oughtn't to have such hard feelings for the ladies. She makes little mistakes sometimes, but her intentions may be good. The man that was with her is a whole lot worse, in my opinion. He happened to be the same bird who took your typewriter."

Tessler jumped. "And you let him get away?" he screamed. "You seen him down there and you didn't pinch him?"

"Listen, Herman. I wanted to trail 'em both so's I might find out something about the stones. I'd caught 'em in a rooming house with the machine the day before, and they gave me the slip by going down the fire escape. When I found 'em down here yesterday, I knew they couldn't get away from me again. But they might not have the stones with 'em and they might keep their mouths shut if I arrested 'em. So I made up my mind I'd let 'em wander for a little while. I couldn't trail all three of 'em at once, so your stenog got away. The man's name's Miller. He and Markoe slipped around into Nassau Street and stopped across the way from Caraway's stationery store. They stood there with their eyes on Caraway's door till after the store closed. Then they began to move back and forth along the block, and I had to keep considerable distance off or they'd have seen me.

"Quite some time after dark, a hole was cut in Caraway's window and a man and a girl stepped out through it into the street. Miller blackjacked the man and started to frisk him as he lay unconscious. When they heard me coming, he and Markoe ran away, with me after 'em."

Tessler's round face was flushed

with excitement. "Did you get 'em?" he cried.

"Yeah, I got 'em both, with the help of the cop on the beat. And your diamonds were in Miller's pocket. I called you up at your home to tell you about it, but you weren't in."

The importer sank into his chair with a sigh of relief. "You've made me feel ten years younger, Billy," he gasped out. "I'd figured those stones were gone for good."

"The fact that the stones were found on Miller makes a pretty clear case against him, but he's keeping his mouth shut, and so's the woman. I'm derned if I can find out how he robbed you or what kind of a part Markoe played in the job. But if I was to make a rough guess, Herman, I'd say your stenog slipped the stones into the typewriter. But if she did, then what's the meaning of what happened at Caraway's store?"

"I give it up," said Tessler. "I ain't good at puzzles. But what's the difference, so long's I get the stones back?"

Wilson produced a little bundle, and, pulling it open, displayed the stolen stones. "They look like they'd been out in the rain," he observed, "and some of 'em have broken out of their wrappers. The tissue's been soaking in water, from the looks of it. I thought that maybe they'd been thrown out of one of your windows into the court behind Caraway's, but it don't seem reasonable to think that nobody would have found 'em there the next day. It's a deep, dark mystery, Herman, and unless we can find your stenog, it prob'ly always will be a mystery."

"Oh, don't bother about finding her!" cried Tessler. "What's the use, anyway?"

"That's what I've been thinking myself," Wilson admitted. "What's the use? I hope I never do find her. The notion of sending a pretty little thing like her to prison rubs me the wrong way."

For a moment Tessler was silent, deep in thought. "Hey, Billy!" he exclaimed presently. "I got an idea. Maybe she was the girl that stepped outa the hole in Caraway's winda."

"Maybe," said Wilson. "I got a quick look at that girl in the dark as I ran past, but I couldn't swear she was your stenog."

"And Caraway's store ain't been robbed?"

"No. Why should anybody with a bundle of diamonds want to rob a stationery store? This business has got me up in the air, Herman. No matter how I figure it, I can't get the answer. But some day maybe Miller or Markoe will squeal."

"If they do there'll be crook No. 4 to account for, too," the diamond dealer reminded him. "We ain't done any figuring at all on him yet."

At this hour, crook No. 4 was lying on a bed in Mamie Costello's house, his head swathed in bandages. Apparently he was asleep, but as Blondy McBride came into the room, he opened his eyes. Very slowly and cautiously, with both hands at his bandaged head to hold it steady, he sat up. He seemed to be suffering from a severe headache, and the effort of raising himself from the pillow brought a wince of pain.

"Blondy, what was that you was telling me about those diamonds?" he inquired as he turned his puzzled, blinking eyes to her face. "I was so dazed I couldn't understand half what you was saying. Did you lose 'em, or did I dream it?"

He had brought up a subject on which Blondy had become extremely sensitive, and she flushed with embarassment. After making the most humiliating blunder of her life, her pride was hurt. In her own estimation her quick hands had been a little too clever for once.

"I slipped 'em into Limpy Looey's pocket," she answered. "That's what I was trying to make you understand last night. I lost my nerve, I guess, Jimmie. When that bo with the whistle came running and a policeman showed up at the corner, it looked like we were trapped for sure. I knew I'd got to get rid of those stones somehow. And then the notion struck me that here was a chance to get even with Limpy. I guess I did get even with him, too. There's that much to console me, anyhow, for they pinched him and Markoe and found the bundle just where I'd slipped it. It was a bonehead trick I pulled and it's cost us a fortune, but how could I have known I was going to get out of that trap free?"

"It's all right, kid. Don't worry about the diamonds. Seems to me I heard you saying something about old Tom Shaddock."

"What!" cried Blondy. "You didn't even understand that? Why, Shaddock's going to live, Jimmie. Yesterday he came out of his trance and said that just before he was hit with the lead pipe he got a look at the man who swung it, and it was Limpy Looey. That lets you out, Jimmie."

Jimmie gave a start that brought a twinge of pain, and he sank back on the pillow.

"Oh, kid!" he gasped out. "That gives you and me another chance—a chance to go straight. And that's the way we're going to go, Blondy."

AMERICAN EXPERT SOLVES GREEK FORGERY

A CASE involving a commission of seven million drachmas in Greek money, or about $140,000, was recently being tried in Athens, Greece. A former employee of the Athens office of a large American tobacco company was suing his employers for this sum on the strength of a typewritten letter, said to have been written by the company's office manager, and promising the commission in question. P. J. Aravantinos, attorney for the tobacco company, thought the letter a forgery, at least in part, and asked the consent of the court to bring the document to the United States in order to obtain the opinion of an expert.

The court gave its consent, and Mr. Aravantinos sailed for New York, where he consulted Albert Osborn, the handwriting expert. On examining the letter, Mr. Osborn declared that a microscopic and photographic examination revealed the fact that the paragraph promising the large commission was typewritten on a different machine and at a later date than the rest of the letter. Mr. Aravantinos returned to Greece with the expert's deposition as to his findings.

AN AUSTRALIAN WILL MYSTERY SOLVED

WHEN Arthur William Apsey, a retired school-teacher, died in Sydney, Australia, a little while ago, there was some consternation over the fact that no will could be found, although he had considerable property. It was known that the deceased had made a will, but the most painstaking search failed to reveal any trace of it. Finally the relatives suggested an exhumation of the body, on the chance that the will might have been buried with it. Accordingly police, gravediggers, lawyers, and relations gathered together in the cemetery, and the coffin was dug up. The guess of the relatives proved correct, as the will was found in the pocket of the pajamas. It was very damp, but on being dried out, the text could readily be deciphered.

READ THE MORNING PAPER

By Leonard Falkner

Author of "Clothes Don't Make the Cop," etc.

AS "Red Mike" scanned the front page of the evening paper with a murderous frown, he chewed savagely at the cigar butt in the left corner of his mouth.

"At it again!" he exclaimed. "Ain't them boids ever gonna let up?"

Eddie Reynold, his partner, continued to practice rolling a pair of dice across the table in the center of the room. "Little Joe," he murmured to himself. "Come on now, Phœbe. Seven! Darn!" He tried with his other hand and finally spoke in the general direction of the morris chair that harbored the ample figure of Red Mike.

"Which birds, and what?" he asked

"Them fellers that run this here newspaper," Red Mike muttered. "They got another one o' those articles in here tellin' the whole blasted town to"—he hastily searched the column for the word he wanted—"to beware of phoney gas-meter inspectors. Wouldn't it give you spineminjitus! The only safe way we had o' spottin' a job, and then these saps got to come along and put rollers under it. I'd like to——"

He crumpled the paper in both hands and hurled it fiercely to the floor as a mild example of what he would like to do the editors, reporters and everybody else even remotely connected with that particular journal.

"Well"—Eddie paused to slide the dice over the table again—"trouble is, we've worked that trick to death, and they just finally got wise to us. Have to dope out some new wrinkle, I guess, if we're going to eat next week."

"Easy said," Red Mike sneered as he raked a set of stubby fingers impatiently through his carrot-colored hair and sank still deeper into his chair. "But I don't see you wearin' a bald spot on your bean thinkin' about it."

"I'm trying," Eddie replied blandly.

"Ya!" Red Mike exclaimed. "So I notice." He fidgeted restlessly for a while, then picked up the paper again

and, smoothing out the wrinkles, resumed reading.

It was, indeed, an unpleasant plight that had befallen the large, cumbersome fellow in the morris chair and his slight, usually agile-brained partner. For months the goose had been hanging high. They had made good "hauls" consistently, eating three savory meals daily, and sometimes four, buying everything they needed and wanted, including even a last year's flivver. Eddie had spent the afternoons posing as a gas inspector and visiting prosperous-looking homes to get the "lay." Then in the dark hours of the morning, they had returned with their burglar tools and made rich harvests of silver, jewelry and money.

But now the police and newspapers were waging a merciless war against them. Hardly an edition came out that did not warn every citizen with more than three dollars to his name to be on his guard against fake gas inspectors. Thus deprived of their most convenient method of finding out where the jewelry was probably kept and where the butler and the man of the house slept, Red Mike and Eddie found their earnings trimmed suddenly to almost nothing. They knew the dangers of entering an unfamiliar house too well to relish taking the risk. But it looked as though they would soon have to do either that or work for a living. It was like choosing between cod-liver oil and castor oil.

Eddie flung the dice again and sighed. If this campaign kept on, they'd soon have grounds for a breach of promise suit against Lady Luck. He glanced up as a low chuckle issued from the depths of the morris chair.

"What's biting you?" he asked.

Red Mike chuckled again.

"Just readin' a little story here," he replied, "about a couple of burglars in Philadelphia what stole two dollars worth of nickel-plated spoons off the top of a sideboard in a house and didn't find five hundred dollars worth o' silver, wrapped up in a flannel cloth, inside. Bet they must'a felt good when they learned about it."

Eddie nodded solemnly and returned his attention to the dice. But after a few moments he looked up abruptly.

"Did you ever notice, Mike, how the papers have stories like that every once in a while?" he asked.

His roommate shook his head.

"Sure," he answered. "That's one reason why I always like to do my jobs up brown, so's they won't have the laugh on me."

"Yes, but listen," Eddie continued. "It gives me an idea. I should think——" He paused and toyed thoughtfully with the dice for a moment.

Red Mike sat up in his chair.

"Let's hear it. Shoot," he said impatiently.

"Well, it's like this," Eddie resumed. "You never heard about any of them burglars going back a couple of nights later and trying again, did you?"

Red Mike considered gravely.

"No, I didn't," he replied. "Guess none of 'em was foolish enough to."

"That's just where you're wrong," Eddie retorted, nodding his head wisely. "That's just where you're wrong. They were foolish enough not to. Why, people take it for granted that if they're robbed in January, they're perfectly safe from another burglary until July, anyway. And they're usually right about it. The first night afterward, I'll admit, the family's kind of nervous about going to bed in the dark. The man of the house probably has to have a shot of Scotch to quiet his nerves, and the butler has two of them while he's getting the bottle. But by the following night, if nothing much was taken, they've all pretty well forgotten about it. In a week or so the man probably stops off on his way home

from the office and has a small safe sent out to the house. They put the silverware in it at night. And that's the last of the burglary, except when they tell their friends about it."

"Sounds like a pretty enough story," Red Mike agreed. "But what's it got to do with this idea you're braggin' about?"

Eddie grinned tolerantly.

"It's got a lot to do with it," he said. "Seeing as the cops have got next to our little gas-inspector stunt to get the lay on jobs, I suggest that we use a new system. We'll go out to-night and pick out a couple of likely looking houses. Then we'll break into them, scatter things around a bit so it'll look as though we made a thorough search and come away. We won't take any chances getting far enough from the window to prevent a quick get-away if it's necessary. And then to-morrow we'll read the morning paper and find out what we didn't get and where it was. Nobody'll ever suspect that we might go back to those places night after to-morrow. So that's just what we'll do. Eh? What say?"

Red Mike nodded his head.

"It listens good," he agreed eagerly. "Let's start."

Eddie glanced at the alarm clock on the dresser. It was after midnight.

"All right," he answered. "You run down to Tony's garage and get the flivver while I wrap up our tools."

In less than a half hour a small, black motor car, the mutual property of Red Mike and Eddie, was scooting along the boulevard that served as the main artery for one of the city's fashionable residential sections.

"Don't drive so fast," Eddie warned his companion. "We're going to work, not to a fire."

But Red Mike, as usual, was in a hurry.

"Ain't we gone about far enough," he asked a few moments later.

Eddie shook his head.

"I'll tell you when we get there," he answered.

But Red Mike was not to be put off for long. Reaching a dark side street, he abruptly swerved the car into it and drew up against the curb.

"This is as far as we go," he said stubbornly.

Eddie shrugged his shoulders and climbed out.

"Have it your way, then," he agreed. "But there are some richer families out farther. Mostly old people around here."

After a period of cautious scouting, they saw a large brick house that looked inviting, set some distance back from the street. Tiptoeing up on the porch, Eddie got out his jimmy and pried open the window. They climbed into a large, luxuriously furnished room that was apparently a library. A careful search netted them a silver statuette and a few other trinkets. Then they quietly turned things topsy-turvy and departed. In another large house, several streets away, they repeated the process, this time searching the dining room. With their small bag of loot they returned to the car and drove home.

"Now to watch the paper to-morrow morning," Eddie said as he prepared for bed.

Red Mike nodded his head so vigorously he singed his eyebrows on a match he was holding for his cigarette.

"Wish it were time already," he declared. "I'm sure anxious to see how this stunt of yours is gonna work out."

He proved his anxiety by rising early the next morning and rushing out to buy a newspaper. Eddie was still sound asleep when he bounded back into the room, waving the paper frantically.

"It's working! It's working!" he shouted, shaking Eddie frantically.

"What? How?" Eddie sat up and blinked.

"Our stunt! Just like you said. They got it. Look!"

He held out the newspaper. But before Eddie could reach for it, he had pulled it back and was reading extracts from the article out loud.

"In the Patterson home, the burglars ransacked only the library, getting nothing of much value. They completely overlooked Mrs. Patterson's valuable collection of silverware in the dining room. Police are astonished by the fact that, although the room was completely upset, neither Mr. Patterson, whose chamber is directly overhead, nor the butler, who sleeps in the rear, heard any noises."

"Remember the butler and the dining room," Eddie broke in.

Red Mike nodded.

"Here's some more," he said.

"Burglars also entered the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Andrews, at 7482 Burgess Street, and looted the dining room. But they got few valuables, as the aged couple are in the habit of keeping their silver and jewelry in a small safe in the adjoining room."

He looked up gleefully.

"Ain't that rich?"

Eddie nodded.

"'Safe in adjoining room,'" he repeated, "and 'aged couple.' What's the rest of the story say?"

"Oh, there's a lot of blah about the old lady at that last place being nervous or something," Red Mike answered impatiently. "I didn't bother to read it."

He hastily tore out the two paragraphs, stuffed them into his vest pocket and tossed the mutilated newspaper into the waste basket.

"Come on, get up and let's eat."

Eddie yawned.

"Don't for everlasting be trying to rush the clock," he complained. "We haven't got a thing to do till to-morrow night."

But Red Mike was as he was, and there was no making him over. He paced back and forth impatiently until Eddie was ready to accompany him out to the restaurant, and there he bolted down his food and tapped his fingers restlessly on the counter while Eddie leisurely finished his.

Eddie was glad when the next night came, if for no other reason than because it promised to put a stop to Red Mike's annoying impatience. At twelve o'clock he calmly ignored the latter's anxious "Let's start." At twelve thirty he answered the same plea with a firm "Not yet." At one he again ignored him, and at one thirty he told him to wait a half hour longer.

When they finally started out he saw to it that he, and not Red Mike, was behind the wheel of the flivver. It was emphatically no time to take chances of getting arrested for speeding.

They parked the car first in an inconspicuously dark street near the Patterson home. Again mounting the porch, Eddie tested and examined the window that they had jimmied two nights before to make certain that it had not been fitted with anything like a burglar alarm in the interim. Satisfied, he pried it open and they crept into the library. From there they made their way cautiously through a hall and into the dining room. Red Mike's eyes sparkled like sunlight on ice when Eddie's flash light illuminated the top of a heavy oaken sideboard. Ornate silver tea and coffee services, goblets, trays and bowls fairly crowded each other for space. They packed them all into a burlap sack that Red Mike had brought along for that purpose. Then they emptied the drawers of dozens of knives, forks and spoons.

"A haul and a half that was," Red Mike exclaimed as, staggering slightly under the load of silver slung over his shoulder, he stepped aside for Eddie to open the tonneau door of the flivver. "Me for tryin' that stunt again soon."

Eddie merely nodded as he lifted the cushion of the rear seat for his partner to deposit the sack underneath.

"Let's get through with this job before we plan another one," he answered.

They now drove to a street neighboring the home of the aged Mr. and Mrs. Andrews.

"Ought to be easy pickin' here," Red Mike commented eagerly. "If the old fellow wakes up, I'll just sock him with me crowbar and you kin keep on workin' at the safe. No use to let a little think like that interfere wit' our work, is there?"

They entered by way of the same dining-room window that they had used two evenings before. Again Eddie led they way with the flash light. He found a door, leading into a small parlor, and they cautiously entered it and looked around. Yes. There was the safe, in the corner by the window. Tiptoeing over to it, Eddie gave the flash light to Red Mike, and, kneeling down, unwrapped his tools.

"Gonna be hard to open?" Red Mike asked in a stage whisper.

"No," Eddie retorted. "Shut up."

"Aw, these two old folks wouldn't hear a cannon explode down here," Red Mike replied sullenly. "They're snorin' like a buzz saw upstairs."

The only answer was the soft whirl of the ratchet drill in Eddie's hands. After a half hour of deft boring, the old-fashioned lock yielded and Eddie pulled open the door. Red Mike eagerly helped him to pry open the compartments. The first gave forth an assortment of jewelry—bracelets, rings, necklaces of gold and platinum. They hastily stuffed them into their pockets and started to examine the second compartment.

"When you fellows are finished there, if you'll spare me a minute——"

Red Mike and Eddie leaped up and stared into the dazzling orb of a flash light. In the darkness behind it they could just make out the dim figure of a tall man holding a revolver in his other hand. He seemed to be smiling.

"Be nice now and hold up your hands."

His voice, coaxing and calm, had an edge of hardness to it that made them obey impulsively.

"What the——" Red Mike started to say, but the man with the gun interrupted him.

"Press that button on the wall in back of you, big boy," he ordered. As Red Mike showed reluctance to obey, he continued: "Shoot you if you don't. Make it snappy."

Red Mike did as he was told and the chandelier spread a bright light over the room. The man with the gun, still smiling slightly, surveyed his two captives, and quickly pocketed his flash light.

"Good fishing," he said finally. "A big one and a little one."

Then after a moment's pause: "What made you come back?"

Red Mike glowered sullenly. Eddie spoke up.

"Just dropped in for some tea," he answered sharply.

"And was looking in the safe for the sugar when I interrupted, I suppose," the tall man finished. His smile changed slowly to a puzzled frown. "'S funny, though. Seems like you must have read the morning paper after either you two or somebody else busted in here the other night, and again it seems like you didn't."

"Well, we did, if that'll help you any," Eddie answered.

"Then how come you didn't read about me?"

Their captor, carefully keeping his revolver trained on them took two quick steps to a stand by the window and curled the fingers of his free hand around the telephone receiver.

"What d'ya mean, read about you?" It was Red Mike who spoke.

"Well, down at the bottom of the story it told about old Mrs. Andrews almost having a nervous breakdown when she found out the place had been burglarized, and then it went on to tell

about hiring me, a private detective, to guard the house hereafter."

Red Mike listened with a sinking feeling. He thought it was more or less rubbing it in when Eddie said in a voice that growled:

"You big sand bag, that was the part you wouldn't take time to read. Said it was a lot of blah."

The detective held up his hand.

"Be quiet, boys, while I telephone police headquarters."

TURKISH POLICE MUST SMARTEN UP

BY order of the prefect of police of Constantinople, the night watchmen of that picturesque and romantic city must shave their long, flowing beards, crop their superabundant hair, discard their baggy trousers and loose clothes and turbans for a garb more nearly resembling a regular police uniform, and cast away their iron-tipped sticks. These sticks have served as a warning to thieves to tell of the approach of the watchman, and will be replaced by weapons resembling a regular policeman's billy.

These watchmen, or *bikdjis*, as they are called, have hitherto been paid by tips given to them by the householders on their beats, a custom which is naturally open to abuse. Hereafter, the municipal government will exact from each family, according to its means, a tax that will be used to pay the watchmen a regular salary and thus put them on the basis of an organized police patrol. The new arrangement, while it will detract from the picturesqueness of Constantinople, will probably be a more effective means of safeguarding life and property from criminals.

"CAT-EYE LIL" ARRESTED IN MILWAUKEE

IN police circles and the underworld, Lillian McDowell is known as "Cat-eye Lil." Her specialty is acting as layout woman or advance agent for some of the country's cleverest and most successful jewel thieves. When she was placed under arrest by the police of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, recently, she was "wanted" in many cities. She was therefore held, pending a request for her extradition to another State, as there did not happen to be a charge against her in Milwaukee.

Among the places where the police are anxious for the pleasure of Miss McDowell's company are Cleveland and Baltimore, where two ten-thousand-dollar jewel robberies are under investigation. In the past, Cat-eye Lil has been under arrest for various larceny offenses in New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Toledo, Kansas City, New Orleans, and Redwood City, California.

Following the announcement that police of Milwaukee had Lil in their toils, several police departments asked for her extradition, but Buffalo, New York, got its request in first.

THE FORBIDDEN DOOR

By Herman Landon

Author of "Smile Number 242," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS

ALONE in the library of the Martenet home, Ernest Mallingham is fascinated by a peculiar contraption in the room—a blue globe suspended between antlers of steel and representing the revolutions of the earth upon its axis.

While he is waiting for Julia Martenet, he wonders whether she knows more about the supposed death of her husband, Maxwell, than she has so far admitted. Later, he realizes that she does.

The following day, when Hannan Martenet, Julia's stepson, is walking around Broadway and Forty-second Street, he realizes he is being shadowed by a girl. When he approaches her, she realizes she has been too open about it and leaves him.

Later Hannan obtains from Mr. Curry, who has charge of the Martenet papers, a letter which was left for him by his grandfather. When he returns to the Illington to his little bungalow perched atop the roof, he finds his telephone disconnected and several lights out of order.

Then he reads his grandfather's note. The message is "Do not attempt to open the iron door until the clock stops. Beware of this man." Following this, there is a pen-and-ink sketch of the man.

In a short while, Hannan is face to face with the man that represents the sketch.

CHAPTER VI.

A DABBLER IN LATIN.

HANNAN'S brain made a few giddy revolutions, and then, with the mental buoyancy of a man whose life is made up of many surprises, he mastered a fair imitation of poise.

"Come in," he said pleasantly.

With many apologies his visitor walked into the room. He hoped Mr. Martenet would not resent the intrusion. He begged forgiveness for coming up without having himself announced. He had been told by the clerk downstairs that Mr. Martenet's telephone was out of order, and so he had ventured to proceed without the usual preliminaries. His name, by the way, happened to be Mr. Peters—Mr. Horace Peters.

Hannan, with one hand in the pocket of his dinner jacket where his grandfather's letter reposed, proclaimed himself happy to make Mr. Horace Peters' acquaintance. Mr. Peters was a short man in faultless evening clothes, and

the long sweep of his swallow tails made him look a little ridiculous. The wide and immaculate expanse of his shirt front seemed a trifle out of proportion. His head was somewhat larger than symmetry allowed. His nose was a thing of ruddy hues and generous dimensions. The mouth need not have been quite so long from corner to corner. In fact, Mr. Peters seemed out of proportion in various ways, both as to physiognomy and stature. And he looked exactly like the sketch in Hannan's pocket.

A little uneasily Hannan fingered his grandfather's letter. Mr. Curry had cautioned him to burn it immediately after reading it, and for no apparent reason he was already wishing that he had done so. It could be of no further use to him. Its contents, the sketch included, were indelibly etched in his memory.

He offered cigarettes, apologizing for having no cigars. Mr. Peters accepted one, declaring he never smoked anything else. Then Hannan struck a match, casually drew the letter from his pocket, formed it into a taper, ignited one end, and held it to the tip of his visitor's cigarette. Then, while covertly studying Mr. Peters' face, he lighted his own. He watched the taper turn into an elongated flake, waited until it had been reduced to char, then opened a window and quickly flung it to the breeze.

"That's that," he said.

"Love letter?" asked Mr. Peters with an engaging smile that revealed a prominent gold tooth. If he thought the younger man's act peculiar, his face showed no sign of it.

Hannan merely smiled mysteriously.

"When I was young," said Mr. Peters, "it was the custom to preserve love letters, tie a nice ribbon around them, and put them away in lavender. Times change, and manners with them." He sighed wistfully. "As old Horace, my great Latin namesake, put it: 'Laudorem vaccit læck.'"

Hannan looked at Horace Peters, then up at the ceiling. His eyes twinkled softly. An amusing and genial sort was Mr. Peters—but dangerous? Hardly! At least, one would never think so to look at him. Was it possible that Winthrop Gaston Martenet had been mistaken for once in his estimate of character?

Mr. Peters polished his lenses. He looked about the room, and a puzzled expression came into his face as he saw the disorder. Either the expression was genuine, Hannan reflected, or else Mr. Peters was a clever actor.

"Quite a rough-house, isn't it?" the younger man remarked. "Somebody sneaked in here and turned things upside down while I was having dinner."

"Dear me!" Mr. Peters looked sincerely astounded. "Burglars, of course?"

"Of course," said Hannan carelessly. "But they didn't get anything."

"That's fortunate. It shows a sad state of affairs, however, when a man is not safe in even a high-class hotel. Yes, a very sad state of affairs, Mr. Martenet. As the great Horace once remarked: 'Calorum curpata quest.'"

Hannan gave him a gently mocking look. "Oh, come now, Mr. Peters. Horace never said anything like that. It isn't even Latin."

Mr. Peters stared at him in astonishment, then grinned in a shamefaced way. "No," he confessed, "it isn't Latin. I don't know any Latin. I just made it up. For years I've been making up sentences that sounded like Latin and springing them on my friends. They sound well and—er—everybody thinks I'm a learned man. You are the first one to jerk me up on it. Imagine that! I have been getting away with it for years, and then you come along and trip me up."

His humiliation made Hannan laugh.

He could see that his rating for intelligence had suddenly gone up in his visitor's estimation. Again he wondered about his grandfather's estimate of the man. Mr. Peters was a fraud —a rather amusing and amiable one— but it was hard to picture him as anything worse than that.

"By the way," said Mr. Peters, recovering from his embarrassment, "I saw an item in the papers this morning to the effect that you were in town. I made up my mind to call on you and see if I could be of any service to you. You are practically a stranger here, having been absent so many years, and a stranger is sometimes in need of friends."

"It was good of you to look me up."

"You haven't called at the old home yet?"

"No, not yet. I shall probably try to go and make a call there tomorrow."

"Do, by all means. Mrs. Martenet, your stepmother, is a very charming lady. I know her well. I also knew your father, Maxwell Martenet. He and I became very close friends during the last few years of his life. I often heard him speak of you, sometimes regretting that he had rather neglected you."

"Oh, I'm sure he had no cause for regrets on that score."

"Yet that was the way he felt. He was a very kind man, Hannan—you don't mind if I call you Hannan? He was a man of a deep emotional nature. It was so deep, in fact, that it rarely showed on the surface. In that one particular he resembled your grandfather somewhat. There was another of nature's noblemen, Hannan, although very few people understood and appreciated him."

"You knew my grandfather?" asked Hannan, suppressing a smile. It was rather humorous to hear Winthrop Gaston Martenet lauded by the very man of whom he had cautioned his grandson to beware.

"Very well," said Mr. Peters with feeling. "Your grandfather was one of my dearest friends, although even I did not always understand him. He was a true friend, a great scholar, and a very fine gentleman."

Mr. Peters appeared deeply moved. For the moment, at least, it was impossible for Hannan to question his sincerity. Winthrop Gaston Martenet and his warning faded entirely into the background.

"You spoke of my father," he remarked. "Have you any theory with regard to his death?"

"Theory? Why theorize about it?" Puzzlement was written all over Mr. Peter's disproportionate features. "He went away and died, and that was all there was to it."

Hannan let the subject drop. Mr. Peters was like all the others. He was unable to conceive of anything dramatic or extraordinary happening to Maxwell Martenet.

"How long do you intend to remain in town?" asked Mr. Peters after a pause.

Hannan drew a long breath. He welcomed a return to lighter topics. "Hard telling. Probably as long as the excitement keeps up."

"Excitement? Have you had excitement?"

"Nothing but," said Hannan. He studied Mr. Peters with a covert but observing gaze. Somehow that last sentence had not sounded quite natural. It had been edged with an undertone that instantly reawakened some of the suspicions instilled in his mind by his grandfather's letter. He resolved to subject Mr. Peters' candor to a little test. "Only this afternoon," he said lightly, "I was set upon by a pair of ruffians in a downtown café."

"Indeed!" Mr. Peters exclaimed, and again Hannan weighed carefully all the

little shades in his voice. "What happened?"

"There was a certain letter in my pocket. They took it away from me," Hannan lied glibly.

"They took it——". Mr. Peters started from his chair, but sank back again. "I hope it wasn't important."

Hannan smiled. His little ruse had succeeded in an astonishing way. Mr. Peters' fragmentary sentence, together with the look of stupefaction that had lingered for just an instant in his eyes, had started a train of flashes running through Hannan's mind.

"I envy you, Mr. Peters," he commented. "I really do. It's a great gift to be able to control one's expression. You controlled yours pretty well that time—better than I could have done myself. Your mask slipped off for just a second, and then it was back again. It was very well done."

"My dear young man"—Mr. Peters made a gesture of bafflement—"I haven't the least idea what you are talking about."

"No? Well, I'll explain. I told you the two bruisers got the letter away from me. It was a lie—and you knew it was a lie. How did you know?"

Mr. Peters gave him a long, injured look. Then his expression changed to one of good-natured frustration mingled with admiration. He studied Hannan's face as if for the first time questioning the young man's unsophisticated look.

"You are a clever young man—very clever," he murmured. "I knew, of course, that the letter was not removed from your possession, for I had received a report to the contrary. Besides, I saw you turn it into a cigarette lighter. I couldn't know it was that particular letter, but I had strong suspicions. Yes, you startled me for a moment—threw me off my mental base. Clumsy of me!"

Hannan's smile grew a little somber. His grandfather's warning came back to him in all its terse forcefulness. Horace Peters, for all his ludicrous appearance, was that astute sort of villain who is too clever to persist in vain pretenses.

"Would you mind telling me," Hannan asked, "why you were so anxious to get hold of the letter?"

"Yes, I would mind very much."

"Do you know its contents?"

"No, but perhaps I could make a close guess." Mr. Peters rolled shrewd, smiling eyes at his young companion. "Among other things, I believe your grandfather said something about me in the letter—something uncomplimentary."

"What makes you think that?"

"Why, you practically told me so yourself. I gathered it from your expression when you first saw me. You had never seen me before, yet you stared at me as if—well, as if somebody had warned you against me." Mr. Peters laughed quietly. "There must have been a description of me in the letter. Otherwise, how did you recognize me? Tell me that, Hannan."

Hannan's eyes narrowed. Mr. Peters' guess had come very close to the truth. "You make me very curious, Horace Peters. As the other great Horace might have said, you've got me guessing. Be a good sport and answer one more question. Why did you come here to-night? It wasn't just your tender heart and loving kindness, was it?"

Mr. Peters hesitated a long time before he answered. At length he got up, crossed the floor a few times with his prim, roosterlike strut, stopped to admire a water color of some merit on the wall, and flicked his coat tails with a staccato movement.

"If I answer you truthfully, you will call me liar," he said in a serio-comic manner.

"Credit me with a little tact," Hannan begged in a faintly mocking tone.

"Well, then——" Mr. Peters turned away from the water color and strutted up to where Hannan stood. He took hold of the solitary button on the young man's dinner jacket and twisted it absently. "You have already guessed my motive, Hannan. It was my kind and tender heart that drew me here tonight. Oh, call me a liar if you like. I don't mind. Your grandfather once called me that. But he was wrong."

The mocking smile on Hannan's lips grew fainter and fainter. He stared at the little man who stood twirling the button on his dinner jacket. Why should Mr. Peters have told such a clumsy and bare-faced lie? A man of his subtlety and mental agility could surely have invented a better one. Why, then—— Hannan wavered a little. It did not seem likely that a man of Mr. Peters' intelligence would have made such an absurd statement unless it happened to be the truth.

"Well, why don't you call me a liar?" the little man went on, still fiddling absently with Hannan's button. "As a matter of fact, I don't care a snap whether you believe me or not. I am only telling you, in order to keep the record straight, that your grandfather did me an injustice. Toward the very last our long and intimate friendship was ruptured by a misunderstanding. I was too proud—or stubborn, if you prefer—to argue with him and try to convince him he was wrong. For that matter," he added, "I'm not going to argue with you."

"Let go my button," said Hannan, a little dazed from his attempt to reconcile his conflicting impressions. "You make me nervous with that fiddling. What was the misunderstanding about?"

"I won't be cross-examined." Horace Peters drew hmself up with dignity. "I can see you think I'm a liar, even though you're not candid enough to tell me so to my face."

Hannan's brain was churning with incongruities. Still another contradiction came to him. "Was it your kind and tender heart that made you sick those two bruisers on me?"

"It was," said Mr. Peters coldly. "I acted for your own good. I don't expect you to believe it, and I shan't attempt to convince you. I can read your mind, young man. You are determined to interpret my actions in the worst possible light. It's beneath my dignity to argue with such as you. Good night—and curse you, sir!"

He snatched up his silk hat and strutted off in great and haughty haste. Hannan was bewildered and speechless. He watched Mr. Peters' flying coat tails, almost tempted to call him back, but feeling it would be useless. A personality like Mr. Peters', full of contradictions, eccentricities, and odd peculiarities, made him feel at a loss. And just then, with his hand on the doorknob, the little man turned. He came back, holding his head high, and stuck his hand in his pocket.

"I almost forgot." His voice was loftily frigid. He drew an envelope from his pocket. "Your father handed me this the last time I saw him. He asked me to deliver it to you."

Hannan took the envelope, glanced at his father's prim and cramped handwriting, and started to open it.

"I have a confession to make," said Mr. Peters in the same cold and haughty tones. "I opened and read your father's letter."

Hannan gave him a dazed look.

"I do not choose to explain," declared the little man. "Neither shall I apologize. I opened and read your father's letter for reasons that seemed sufficient to me."

With that he strutted off again. Hannan looked down at the flap of the envelope. The opening and resealing must have been done very cleverly, for no sign of tampering was evident. It

occurred to him that Mr. Peters could have withheld his confession and Hannan would have been none the wiser. He drew out and read the inclosure. The letter was trivial in its nature, consisting merely of a number of suggestions concerning the disposition of certain articles belonging to the family—just such a letter as might have been written by a man of quiet and humdrum tendencies. If Mr. Peters had expected to discover something of a sensational nature, he must certainly have been disappointed.

Hannan felt a little disappointed, too. And again he asked himself why Mr. Peters had confessed that he had opened the letter. Perhaps it was a sort of pride—the pride of a man who, though he may stoop to shabby things, yet disdains concealment. In the midst of his perplexity his eyes fell on the line at the top of the letter. It was only a date, and, as often happens, he had not noticed it at first. His gaze fixed on the line with an intensity out of all proportion to its apparent importance. At first, indeed, he could not understand why the line absorbed his attention in such a curious way.

"October 1, 1923," he mumbled.

He jerked up his head, then stood stonily still. Thoughts trudged sluggishly through his dazed brain. October 1, 1923. The letter had been written a little over two years ago. And his father—Hannan suddenly felt a little shock—his father was supposed to have died four years ago. A mistake of some kind? Perhaps his father had meant to write 1921. But that was not very likely; people rarely made mistakes of that sort. Careless ones sometimes dated their letters a year back, especially in the first weeks of a new year, but they were not so likely to err on the side of the future. No, the date was probably correct, yet——

He looked up from the letter. Mr. Peters, with his jutting coat tails and bewildering ways, was gone. But he could not have been gone long—only a minute or two. In all probability he had not yet reached the street. Likely as not he would wait a few moments for a taxi.

Hannan reached for his hat. A very still, small voice said, *"Beware!"* But Hannan was not listening.

CHAPTER VII.

THE HOUSE ON BANK STREET.

"BANK STREET," said the sign on the corner. It was not a particularly inviting block, thought Hannan. It was dreary, dirty, shabby, and poorly illuminated, and the house near the middle, with a delicatessen shop on one side and a laundry on the other, looked as dismal and unattractive as all the rest. There was a sharp discrepancy between such a house and Horace Peters' elegant evening garments. The latter did not seem to belong in the former. Yet it was to this very house his pursuit of the extraordinary Mr. Peters had led him.

Barely a minute ago he had seen Mr. Peters descend from his taxi, and he had caught a final glimpse of the flying coat tails just before the door closed. Now Hannan stood there a little bewildered and undecided, wondering just why he had decided to follow Mr. Peters surreptitiously rather than accost him openly while he waited for his taxi outside the Illington. He had decided quickly and partly on impulse, and it was hard to trace such a decision back to its source. In any event, what was done was done, and it now behooved him to determine his next step.

His mind was soon made up, and again his decision was largely a matter of impulse. He sauntered closer and looked up at the house. Perhaps it was not so strange, after all, that the elegant Mr. Peters should belong there. It was one of the oldest parts of New

York, he recalled, and rich and poor alike dwelt in this district. What puzzled him was that there was no sign of life about the house. Perhaps Mr. Peters was in one of the rooms in the rear. With a nonchalant air he walked up the steps and looked for the bell. The familiar white disk was not in evidence, but he noticed, instead, that the door stood open a tiny crack.

"Careless," Hannan mused, "or else——" He did not complete the thought, but walked in and drew the door to behind him. It would be interesting, he thought, to obtain a glimpse of Mr. Peters in repose, to get some sort of side light on the man when he thought himself unobserved. It would be interesting—and illuminating as well.

He came forward softly. The house might have been unoccupied, it was so still. It was dark everywhere. He picked his way past a stairway post and down a hall. He brought up against a door. After a brief wait he turned the knob gently. Inch by inch he pushed the door open. Step by step he came forward. Presently he slackened his pace, then stopped altogether. It was his nostrils, rather than his eyes or his ears, that conveyed a warning. It was still everywhere, but a faint odor of cigarette smoke hung in the air.

And then, suddenly, a little click sprang out of the stillness. A light flashed up—not a very bright light, but the abruptness of it dazzled Hannan for a moment.

"Oh, you, Hannan!" The voice was Mr. Peters'. It was edged with a faint note of surprise, or so Hannan thought. He was seated at a reading table, with his feet resting on a chair, a cigarette hanging limply from his lips. He had removed his coat and was exposing what seemed an inordinately large shirt front for such a little man. "Sit down," he added, but his voice was not very friendly. It was still marked with the chill that had characterized it at the Illington.

Hannan sat down. He felt sheepish and a little guilty. Mr. Peters had caught him in a manner at once startling and dramatic.

"You needn't tell me why you came here or how you got in," said the little man. "Explanations are always awkward. At any rate"—with a faint, amused grin—"I generally find them so."

"The door was open," said Hannan.

"Really? Well, perhaps so. I've noticed the lock is a bit troublesome. I must be more careful. One of these nights somebody may walk in on me who is not quite so harmless as you." A slight sneer accentuated the word "harmless."

"Were you expecting somebody?"

"My dear young man, do I look as if I were expecting somebody? If I were, do you suppose I would be sitting here in the dark?"

"That would depend on what sort of person you were expecting."

"Not bad, Hannan." He gave the younger man an admiring glance. "Not bad."

A little silence fell, and then Hannan plunged into the subject uppermost in his thoughts. "Mr. Peters, when did my father hand you the letter you gave me?"

"Why, let me see, it must have been about a week before his death."

"You mean before his disappearance?"

Mr. Peters shrugged. "Well, it's the same thing."

Hannan leaned forward and gazed into the curiously mismated features, as if trying to read the thoughts hidden behind them. "Mr. Peters, did you notice the date of the letter?"

"The date? What does the date matter?"

"Did you notice it?"

"No. I don't believe I did."

Hannan fell silent. He wondered whether Mr. Peters would have delivered up the letter to him if he had noticed the date. Then, watching alertly the face across the table, he said:

"The letter was dated October 1, 1923."

With a loud thump Mr. Peters' feet fell from the chair on which they had rested. For a moment he averted his face as if to hide his emotions from the younger man. His fingers writhed a little; his jaw quivered queerly.

"Well, what of it?" He was quite himself again. With a disparaging gesture he brought his hand down on the table, with fingers spread out. The finely manicured nails, polished to just the right degree of gloss, gleamed a faint pink in the light of the electric lamp.

"Don't you see? If my father died four years ago, he could not have written this letter two years ago."

"Obviously not." Mr. Peters looked a little bored. Once more he elevated his feet to the chair. His immaculate shirt front crackled as he leaned back comfortably. "That brings us face to face with two alternatives. Either your father did not write the letter, in which case it may be presumed to be a forgery, or else he did not die four years ago. Which do you prefer?"

Hannan reflected. In the lamplight his face looked very serious, also a little pale. His usually mild eyes were full of hard glints and dark suspicions. He recalled the simple and humdrum contents of the letter. The first alternative crumbled. There was no reason, as far as he could see, why any one should forge a letter of that kind.

"I believe my father wrote the letter," he said steadily.

"Then," and Mr. Peters turned his eyes languidly at the ceiling, "we are forced to accept the second alternative —that your father was still alive two years ago."

Hannan rose, walked around the table, placed his hand on the arm of Mr. Peters' chair, and leaned over. There was a touch of flint in his voice as he spoke.

"Tell me—is he alive *now?*"

Mr. Peters shrugged. A disdainful sniff emanated from his huge lump of a nose. His eyes, a little reddish around the irises but otherwise of an indeterminate color, were still fixed on the ceiling. "I don't want to talk about that," he said irritably. "I always shun the subject of death. I am a coward when it comes to that. I could never stand the sight of a dead body. Even a dead animal gives me the shivers. I don't like to travel in the open country because I would be sure to see a cemetery somewhere. There would be high walls around all cemeteries if I had my way. Undertakers would be forced to remove their signs and put heavy curtains in their windows. The only thing in life that I am afraid of is—death. Why do you bring up disagreeable subjects, Hannan?"

He smiled faintly, but his irritable tone was edged with a note of dread. Hannan felt he had spoken out of a heart haunted by a single morbid fear. He felt, too, that Mr. Peters could answer his question if he chose to do so, and his determination to make him speak grew stronger. A dim vision of his father rose before his eyes—a wistful, solitary figure, often misunderstood, a man whom even a mysterious disappearance had failed to elevate beyond the realm of the humdrum and commonplace.

He shook Mr. Peters' shoulder. "Answer me!"

Reluctantly the little man removed his feet from the chair and sat up straight. "What was it you wanted me to tell you?"

"I want to know if my father is alive now."

Mr. Peters' flabby mouth tightened a

little. He toyed with a paper cutter. His eyes roamed the room, dim and shadowy except within the radius of the hooded lamp. The blare of a motor horn came from the outside, and then all was silence again—a tense, heavy silence that seemed appropriate to solemn revelation.

"Does it really matter?" asked Mr. Peters.

"Very much."

The little man reached out his white hand and toyed with Hannan's button. His long lips dangled open in a smile that had no glow to it. He swept back a damp bang of reddish hair from his forehead.

"Would you like to go to your father, Hannan?"

"Eh?" It was as if an electric bolt had been hurled into Hannan's body. "You mean——"

"Would you like to go to him?"

Hannan stood as if frozen into immobility. Mr. Peters' tone was soft, silken, like the sound of a snake rubbing itself against a grassy surface, but he did not notice it. It was the words that filled him with a sense of weird and overwhelming excitement.

"Then he is here—in this house?"

"Let go my arm," said Mr. Peters, wincing. "Would you like to go to him? But of course you would. Very well. You shall."

His white, smooth hand moved. Somewhere in the house a peal sounded. It awakened a tremor in Hannan's dazed mind, but still he did not move. There was a dismal, awesome sorcery in the situation that overwhelmed his senses. Go to his father? Then it was true! His father was alive! But what was this?

Mr. Peters was talking—talking in a low tone and in a foreign tongue. At first he appeared to be talking to himself. Then, gradually, Hannan became aware that another person had entered the room and was now standing at his back. The other person must have entered very silently, for he had heard nothing. He did not turn to look at the newcomer. Mr. Peters' words, uttered in that sibilant foreign tongue, exercised a curious magnetism on his senses. They formed pictures in his mind—green isles in sun-caressed seas, gleaming brown bodies, groves of fronded palms, a vista of thatched roofs, skies of the most exquisite azure.

The picture faded away. It was blotted out by the sudden realization that he understood every word the little man was saying. The import of the speech seemed to leap upon him like a living, ravenous thing. He jumped, dodged, but fingers that possessed the strength of a gorilla closed around his throat. The room grew black. There was a choking, maddening torture in his lungs. Now he was being lifted, carried away.

The room was still again. Mr. Peters had not left his place at the table. Now, alone once more, he cocked his head as if trying to catch remote sounds. For a time he sat thus, with a far-away look on his oddly assorted features.

He looked at his watch. Half an hour had passed. He stirred himself from a sort of brooding stupor.

"It must be over by now," he muttered. Though he was talking to himself, his voice had an oddly penetrating quality. "Lucky thing I've got Papu to attend to those little matters for me. Could never do it myself. Moral coward—that's it. But Papu—— Intelligent fellow for a Malay. Does everything he is told, and does it right." He shivered a little. "Well, it's done. As the great Horace might have remarked——"

The door opened. A huge man with a brutish face entered, spoke a few words in his native tongue, placed a few articles on the table in front of Mr. Peters, and withdrew.

Mr. Peters lighted a cigarette and

gazed at the articles Papu had placed on the table—a gold watch, a knife, shirt studs, collar buttons, cuff links, a few silver coins.

"Papu forgets nothing," he murmured. "Hannan is gone—every trace of him destroyed. Great things, those acids. But they are powerless to destroy metals. These things might have told a tale. They must be buried out of sight, and that will be the last of Hannan Martenet.

He scooped the articles into an envelope. Then he opened a drawer, poured a drink from a bottle, and quaffed it down. A sense of well-being seemed to sweep over him. His thoughts appeared to dip into more pleasant channels. His eyes roved over the room, pausing for an instant in the rear. It was shadowy back there, for the light from the electric lamp did not reach very far. Yet Peters noticed a significant bulge in the curtains that hung over the doorway.

The faintest of smiles tugged at his lips and wrinkled the bulbous, ruddy nose.

"The clock——" He chuckled. "The iron door——" He chuckled once more.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CARETAKER OF VALHALLA NOTCH.

A LONG, rawboned, sinewy individual was John Breck, with a seamed, sun-browned face, cautious, gray eyes, and an air of quiet capability. He did not look his sixty years, for he was of a happy disposition, even if his face looked a little dour and his eyes sometimes had a brooding, wary expression. He had a good job, at two hundred dollars a month, which was certainly an unheard-of wage for a caretaker whose sole task was to look after an unoccupied house in a hollow surrounded by mountainous wilderness. Moreover, his old age was well provided for, and his son David, now conducting an unflourishing shoe business in Conway, would step into his place when he was no longer able to attend to his simple duties. It was so provided in the last will and testament of Winthrop Gaston Martenet, who had been the original owner of Valhalla Notch.

Although his duties did not weigh heavily on John Breck, he executed them conscientiously and with thoroughness. In his honest heart he knew that no caretaker could possibly be worth two hundred dollars a month, the sum which he received regularly from a bank in New York, and so he did his utmost to earn as large a portion of it as he could. He could satisfy his conscience in no other way. Now and then a certain Mr. Curry would come from New York to make an inspection, and he had never had occasion for finding fault. John Breck always did a little more than was expected of him. Being a handy man, he kept the house in repair and tended the garden, although he could have hired outside help for that. Consequently he was a fairly busy man, and he had been increasingly busy since his wife died five years ago.

Every evening at dusk he closed the iron gate in the tall picket fence that surrounded the estate. The last thing at night, usually about ten o'clock, he went the rounds of the large, rambling house, built mostly of stone, seeing that the windows and doors were properly closed and that everything was in order. He had many things to wonder about as he made these rounds. He often wondered, for instance, why Winthrop Gaston Martenet had built such a magnificent house in an all but inaccessible wilderness, miles removed from the nearest habitation. He wondered, too, why the house had been constructed in such a queer way, with so many wings and twisting halls and queer nooks. Above all else, he wondered about the clock and the iron door.

Strange things, these. Perhaps his

dour and brooding expression was due in part to his having wondered about them so much. A man cannot dwell in the midst of mysteries for long without absorbing something of them into his being. It was so with John Breck, although he was neither very imaginative nor very sensitive. When he saw things with his eye which his reason told him could not be, then John Breck felt a little chill along his spine, and the lonely nights at Valhalla Notch were full of goblins and pigwigens. Consequently John did the sensible thing and tried not to look too long at these things, or, at least, not to bother his brain with them.

At times, however, they were a little too much for him. It was especially so on stormy nights like the present, when the wind swooped down from Old Blighty, the highest peak in the surrounding mountain range, and howled around the corners of the house, when the rain came down in gale-driven sheets, and there were queer noises in the winding corridors of Valhalla Notch. On such nights it was impossible not to look at things, to think and wonder and speculate about them. The wind, the rain, and the outer darkness seemed to conspire against his peace of mind, to put him in a mood that made it hard to keep his thoughts where they belonged.

It was so to-night. John, starting his rounds a little earlier than usual, had begun at the top of the house and worked downward, switching the lights on and off as he went from room to room. With even more than his usual care he had looked into dim corners and tested door locks and window fastenings. It was a wild night outside, and he could not help feeling a little solemn at the thought that there was not another human being within seven or eight miles. John was alone in a house full of queer things and creeping noises.

It was not yet ten when he reached the large room on the ground floor that had been Winthrop Gaston Martenet's study. "Old Winthrop," as he had been sometimes called, had spent a great deal of his time here during the latter years of his life. Next to the laboratory, which was in the rear of the house, and connected with the study by means of a short hall, this had been his favorite room. Nothing had been removed or altered since his death. It was full of books—shelves upon shelves of them—and there were also a few pictures, a few ancient chairs, a few queer-looking rugs, and a number of things which John did not know the names of.

"I'll give it a good dusting some day," said John to himself, surveying the room and seeing that everything was in order. His tour of inspection was finished. About all that remained to be done was to go to the little brick house in the rear of the main building and shut off the generator. Then he could crawl into bed and be sung to sleep by the whining wind and the beating rain. But something seemed to detain him. It was the kind of night that always made his mind work in queer ways. He looked at the large oil painting of Old Winthrop that hung on the wall. It was the work of an artist friend, and it was supposed to be a wonderful picture. Even John, unschooled in such things, could appreciate the lifelike quality of it. The face was severe and classical—though he did not think of it in just such terms—and the eyes were those of a dreamer. He sensed a contradiction, even though he could not analyze it. Those soft, flashing eyes did not seem to belong in that hard face. There was something about it that fascinated him. Many a time he had seen Old Winthrop look just like that.

The picture hung close to a small door in the rear of the room. John imagined that the eyes of Old Winthrop were watching that door. Yet there was no harm in opening it and passing

through. John did so now and switched on the light in the ceiling of the short hall just beyond. It was not until you walked down this little hall and came to the door at the farther end that trouble might befall you.

What kind of trouble John did not know, but he had been emphatically warned not to open this second door or permit any one else to do so. It was a door made of iron, and it communicated with Old Winthrop's laboratory. Twice a week, at night, John left an ample basket of provisions at this door, and in the morning the basket was always gone. Consequently somebody must be living on the other side, although John had never seen this occupant. It was a mystery, of course—one of the many mysteries that pervaded Valhalla Notch. John never permitted himself to think about them. He considered he was being paid for not worrying his brain with such things.

There was another mystery close by, and now John lifted his eyes and gazed at it. It was a large clock sunk into the wall of masonry just above the iron door. It was not only the largest clock John had ever seen in a private house, but the most curious as well. John had never wound it and, as far as he knew, no one else had ever done so. It was a strange clock, indeed. As far as John Breck could see—though he had never examined it very closely—there was no place to wind it. Yet the clock was always ticking, always running, and it always kept correct time. Even as he looked at it, it began to strike ten.

John shook himself. "Funniest thingumbob I've ever seen," he muttered.

The clock ceased striking. John shook himself again. It was not natural for the thingumbob to act that way. Why should a thing keep running when there was nothing to make it run? Ordinary clocks had to be wound regularly, but not this one. It just ticked blithely on, scoffing at the natural order of things and outraging John's sense of fitness. Even before Old Winthrop's death the thingumbob had been going on this way, and John sometimes felt it would go on forever, ticking and striking long after John's pulse had ceased to beat. Small wonder he felt a bit creepy whenever he looked at it.

He decided he would look no longer. The silence was a little oppressive in this narrow hall, bordered by walls of masonry and having no other openings than the door at each end. The wild voices of the storm did not reach here, nor the little creaking sounds that were noticeable in other parts of the house. He switched off the light in the ceiling and returned to the library. Once more he glanced up at the picture of Old Winthrop on the wall, struck again by the contrast between the soft, dreamy eyes, and the harsh mold of the lips, and then something made him look down at the floor.

He stared, gaped, mumbled something under his breath, and then he shook himself to make sure he was quite awake. Here was another mysterious thing, and doubly startling because it was something new in John Breck's experience. Just in front of the huge fireplace there were footprints on the bare hardwood floor. They were fresh, wet marks, formed of sodden mud and looking as if somebody had walked across the floor wearing a pair of rubbers. John looked at them groggily, tracing them with his eyes until they were lost from sight in the heavy rug that covered all but the outer portions of the floor.

"Say, what you doing here?" asked John, addressing the footprints, for a man who lives much alone usually gets into the habit of talking to inanimate things.

He scratched his head, covered with thick, iron-gray hair that was wont to grow quite long between his visits to

the barber, eight miles away. The footprints hinted plainly enough of a trespasser, but where could the trespasser have come from? He had closed the gate in the picket fence a little after five, and after that it would have been difficult for any one to enter the grounds. Besides, what would a stranger be doing here? Valhalla Notch was far off the main roads, and it was very rarely that any one drifted in this direction. Yet there was no getting around the fact that there was a stranger in the house, one who did not care to make his presence known.

John was troubled. The strangest part of it all was that the footprints had not been there ten minutes ago. Of that he was certain. They must have appeared, then, while he stood in the little hall, looking at the thingumbob. That meant that the stranger had just left the library and could not be far away. He shook off his perplexities and fell to work. The trespasser's movements could probably be traced by the footprints. But soon he was forced to abandon this plan, for the wet trail ended in the middle of the rug. Possibly the stranger had removed his rubbers, realizing he was leaving tracks behind him.

"I'll get the skeesicks," said John to himself in a grim tone. "I'll teach him how to——"

He stopped and jerked up his head. From somewhere above him a sound came, almost drowned in the din of wind and rain, but John knew what it meant. A door had banged shut overhead. The prowler was upstairs. In a moment John was transformed from a sorely perplexed man into a man of action. He ran to the south wing, where his bedroom was, and from under the pillow, where he kept it in readiness for emergencies, he took a revolver. Then he ran upstairs, crept up to the door directly above the library, opened it softly, reached out his hand, and touched the electric switch, but the light as it flashed on revealed no prowler. Instead, through the open door at his back, came the sound of some one stumbling on the stairs.

John swung round, darted out the door, and, holding his revolver in readiness for action, switched on the light in the upper hall. He glanced up the broad staircase, saw a figure that was little more than a shadowy blur disappear around the balustrade, and in a second he started in pursuit. He was lithe and loose-jointed, and he could run fast and with the minimum of noise. But when he reached the upper landing there was still no prowler to be seen. Neither were there any more sounds to indicate which way he had gone.

"Drat the skeesicks!" said John feelingly. Above him were the winding mazes of the attic. Below were the dim, zigzagging halls, with a great number of doors opening into rooms long unused. All over were many queer nooks in which a prowler could hide. There was nothing to do but make a systematic search of the whole house. It was a dreary task and took the better part of an hour, and in the end he had nothing for his trouble. Chagrined and doubly mystified he returned to the library.

There he sat down and lit his pipe. His glance fell on the soggy footprints on the floor. After all, they were no more mystifying than certain other things in the house—the thingumbob above the iron door, for instance. Yet it was uncomfortable to sit there looking at the footmarks and realize that a stranger was hiding somewhere in the house. John spread out his long legs and smoked as philosophically as he could. He had a strong suspicion that the prowler's presence in the house was in some way connected with the iron door, for he could think of nothing else that could possibly attract a stranger. For that matter, he could not see how even the iron door could attract anybody,

except as an object of curiosity. Well, he would simply have to sit and watch and wait. If anybody tried to get into the little hall that communicated with the iron door, John would be there to stop him.

He made himself as comfortable as he could, for he had given up the thought of going to bed. The storm must be increasing in fury, for the rain hurled itself with greater and greater force against the windows. At any rate, he had a comfortable chair, and his pipe was drawing well. He pitied anybody who had to be out a night like this.

Through the hall door, standing open a crack, came the chimes of the thingumbob striking twelve. The last stroke had barely died when John dropped his pipe and sprang to his feet. A shrill peal cut its way across the din of the storm. Before he could steady his mind against this fresh surprise, another peal rang out.

There was some one at the gate.

CHAPTER IX.

A VISITOR IN THE NIGHT.

IT was an eventful night at Valhalla Notch, a place where generally nothing ever happened. First there had been the clandestine visitor who left wet footprints on the floor and took care to remain unseen. Now there appeared to be another sort of visitor, one who rang the bell in the approved manner of a well-intentioned person. But what could anybody be wanting at a place like this, and on such a night?

John dropped the revolver into his pocket, wrapped himself in a raincoat, and pulled a slouch hat well down over his forehead. The gate was about three hundred yards from the house, and it would not take long to get a thorough soaking on a night like this. A blast of wind and rain almost knocked him over as he stepped out in the open, and the gale tore at his clothing as if trying to rip it to pieces. He wondered who the caller might be. Mr. Curry sometimes made unheralded visits of inspection, but he would hardly call in a storm like this, and John could think of no one else who might have a reason for calling at Valhalla Notch.

As he drew closer to the gate, a white glare cut a wedge through the blackness. He could hear a motor humming irregularly, as if missing on one or more cylinders. Holding his revolver in readiness with one hand—for he was prepared for almost anything to-night—he unlocked the gate and came cautiously forward. He gasped a little, although he should have been immune to surprises by this time, for the sole occupant of the car was a girl. He dropped the revolver into his pocket and bent over for a closer look at her.

"Can you tell me the way to Intervale?" asked the girl, shouting the words at him in order to make them heard.

"Intervale?" John shouted back. "Lands, miss, you're away off the track. Intervale's way over on the other side of the range."

"Oh, dear!" She groaned in disgust. "Is this a hotel?" she inquired, leaning out and looking at the light from the library window twinkling among the trees.

"No, miss. It's a private house. You won't find a hotel anywheres near. Terr'ble night for a lady to be out."

"Oh, I wouldn't mind if only the engine was working right. I could hardly get up that last hill, and as I came down on the other side the brakes started giving out."

"It's a mighty steep hill, miss." John regarded her with sympathy. It was a touring car, without side curtains. She looked very wet and cold, and tired as well. John was conscious of a struggle within himself. While his instructions did not exactly forbid him to admit visitors to Valhalla Notch, he felt

it was not quite the proper thing to do. Yet, she was a pathetic sight in John's eyes, slight of build, with a small, childish face, and probably not a day over twenty. "Did you say the brakes ain't working right, miss?"

"They'll just about hold out if there aren't any more steep hills."

John's mind was made up. For miles around there was nothing but hills, and all of them were steep and some of them were on the edge of precipices. She would probably meet with an accident, and John felt it would be his fault if he permitted her to go on.

"Better come in and have a cup of tea, child," and with that he flung the gates wide and motioned her to drive in. Once inside the house, he conducted her to the library, then brought an armful of wood and kindled a fire. Though the month was August, the house was damp and cold.

"Dry yourself before the fire while I make some tea," he told her, then took himself off to his own quarters in a remote wing of the house. Fifteen minutes later he was back with a tray of tea and sandwiches. For an instant, as he sat the tray down, his eyes narrowed suspiciously. The girl had given a nervous start as he entered the room, causing him to wonder whether her sole occupation during his absence had been that of drying her clothes.

She had removed her coat and hat and stood before him in a simple frock of blue serge. Raindrops were still glistening in her hair, but her face testified to the recent use of the powder puff. John felt rather ashamed of himself for his suspicions as he sat down and watched her drink the tea and eat the sandwiches. She had a pretty face framed by short, brown curls. Her eyes of hazel gazed at him in a direct, friendly way. She looked a little more mature than when he saw her in the car. Then he had estimated she was barely twenty. Now he began to wonder. Twenty-two—twenty-three? Two or three years made a difference when one was young.

"You make the most wonderful tea," she told him.

John brightened. "Glad you like it. Now what might your name be, miss?"

"Viola Lane. I live in New York, and I am on my way to visit my aunt in Intervale."

"Viola Lane, eh? Nice name. It fits you, too. Mine's John Breck. You can call me John. That's what most folks used to call me. Lately I ain't seen many people."

With a sigh of satisfaction she pushed her chair away from the table, turned to the fire, and lighted a cigarette. John had never seen a woman smoke a cigarette before, and he was not quite sure that he approved. Yet she did it so daintily and naturally that he could not find fault.

"You can turn in whenever you feel like it," he told her. "I fixed up one of the upstairs rooms while the tea water was boiling."

"You mean I can stay here for the night?"

"Why, miss, I wouldn't send a dog out in this kind of storm."

"You're awfully kind, John." She gave him a grateful smile. "Late, isn't it?" with a glance at her wrist watch. "But I don't feel tired now. I'd rather talk with you. But"—doubtfully—"maybe you are sleepy."

"Not a bit. Fact of the matter is, I didn't mean to go to bed to-night, anyhow. I'm going to stick right in this chair."

"Why on earth do you want to sit up all night?"

"Oh, because," said John mysteriously.

Miss Lane's eyes were fixed on the floor. She smiled faintly. "Maybe I can guess. You expect him to come back—isn't that it?"

"Him—who?" John's mouth dangled open.

The girl was still looking down at the floor. "He wears a narrower shoe than you do, although the length is about the same."

John choked on a whiff of tobacco smoke. He traced the girl's gaze and saw that she was looking down at the footprints on the floor, now reduced to a few clots of dried mud. He gave her a startled glance.

"Oh, the skeesicks!" His face closed up. "Say, miss, you're a smart one! I wouldn't have thought it of you—no siree."

"Then I must be cleverer than I look." She gave a pleased laugh. "What became of him?"

"Wish I knew," said John grimly. "Say, miss, are you one of those lady deteckatives?"

"Mercy! Do you think I look like one?"

"No, you don't," said John emphatically, though he had no clear idea what a lady detective should look like. "I don't see how you can tell so much from a few specks of mud."

"Oh, but it's awfully simple, John. I knew those mud prints weren't left by you because I noticed how carefully you wiped your feet on the doormat. And then, from the look you gave me when you saw me in the car, I gathered two things. One was that something troublesome had happened. The other, that you were not accustomed to receiving visitors in this place. It wasn't very hard to put two and two together after that."

John's admiration rose. At the same time he felt a little uneasy. All his life he had felt that way toward women who looked simpler than they really were.

"You're the observingest girl I ever did see," he declared.

The girl went down on her knees and subjected the dried mud tracings to a closer inspection, following the tracks to where they disappeared in the rug.

"I can tell you another thing," she announced. "The mysterious personage is a cripple."

"Cripple, eh?" John looked doubtful. "For a cripple he moved terribly fast."

"Well, maybe not a cripple, exactly, although he comes down much harder on one foot than the other. Maybe he is only limping from a recent injury."

John eyed her narrowly. "What gets me," he remarked, "is how a girl as smart as you are could lose her way as badly as you did to-night."

Miss Lane rose. Their eyes tangled in a long glance. There was faint mockery in the girl's. "Not suspicious, are you, John?"

"Nope—just wondering."

She laughed, then started to move about the room with a swinging stride, stopping now and then to examine some object of interest. John's eyes followed her. She moved with a fresh, easy grace. She made him think of his daughter, now sleeping under the hemlocks in the cemetery at Dixville.

"Well"—she stretched herself luxuriously—"since I had to get lost, I'm glad I came to Valhalla Notch."

"Uh-huh. You mighta fared worse." John gave her another long, narrow glance. "Mind telling me, Miss Lane, how you knew this was Valhalla Notch?"

"Why——" She faltered. Her face was averted, but he saw that her slight shoulders shook a little. "Didn't you tell me?"

"I'm sure I didn't."

"But you must have. How else would I have known?" She dismissed the subject lightly. "Who is that?" pointing to the oil portrait of Old Winthrop.

John had suddenly grown uncommunicative. "Somebody who lived here once."

She studied the picture. "Curious face! Stern lips and dreamy eyes. Interesting combination. I have a feeling I've seen it before. But it was a much younger face that I saw."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, much younger. The name of the young man was—let me see now—Hannan Martenet."

John almost dropped his pipe. "You know Hannan Martenet?"

"Not exactly. I've only met him once or twice."

"Where did you see him?"

"Why, in New York, a week or two ago. It was just a casual sort of meeting." Her hazel eyes twinkled slyly at the portrait. "He's a casual sort of young man, you see."

John pulled darkly at his pipe. "I've heard Hannan was back in America. That's his granddaddy up there. They say he takes after him a lot."

"Yes"—with a thoughtful nod—"I am sure he does. He has the same forehead, nose, and eyes. But the mouth is different, not so tight and grim. Hannan Martenet has a nice mouth."

John smoked stolidly. He wondered just how "casual" her meeting with young Martenet had been.

"But he is clever—cleverer than you would think from looking at him," Miss Lane went on. "Ever so many young men with nice mouths are only fools. Hannan Martenet is different, though. If you don't look out, he'll fool you." She gave a laugh that sounded reminiscently rueful. Suddenly her face sobered. "Have you heard what happened to him?"

"Has anything happened to him?"

"Don't you read the papers, John?"

"About twice a month. It's eight miles to the post office, and there's no deliveries in these backwoods. What's happened to Hannan?"

"He's disappeared."

John choked on tobacco smoke. "Eh?"

"Disappeared—vanished off the face of the earth." Her tone was grave and mystified. "It happened the second night he was in New York. Nobody knows what's become of him. Many people think he is dead."

"Dead?" said John in a hollow voice. "You mean—murdered?"

"Maybe. Or else kidnaped. There's been no trace found of him. He left his hotel late in the evening, accompanied by a friend. At least, it's supposed his companion was a friend. None of the hotel attendants seem able to describe him except to say that he was a short man with a funny face and a large nose."

"Almighty queer," said John after a long pause.

"Yes, it's very strange. Did you ever see Hannan Martenet, John?"

John appeared to search his memory. "Once, when he was a wee mite of a tot. His granddaddy brought him out here one day. But that was many years ago. I guess he's forgotten all about it." He relit his pipe with a troubled air. "So Hannan's gone, eh? Terr'bly queer!"

"His father, Maxwell Martenet, disappeared the same way, didn't he?"

John nodded heavily. "That's what makes it so darned queer—father and son vamosing the same way. It's four years now since Maxwell Martenet dropped out of sight. There's no mystery about what happened to him, though. He just went away and died."

"Sure of that, John?"

"Dead sure." John gazed narrowly down the stem of his pipe. "Maxwell Martenet wasn't the kind mysterious things happen to."

"So they all say." A somber, whimsical smile tinged her lips. "I sometimes wonder, though, John, does it seem reasonable to you that a man should just walk away and die?"

"Why not? I've seen dogs do the same thing. Some dogs know by in-

stinct when they're going to pass out, and they pick a nice and quiet spot to die in. They don't want nobody around. Maybe it's the same way with some folks."

Miss Lane sat down and gazed speculatively into the shadowy corners of the room. Her small face, with the lights and shades of the fire playing upon it, was very serious. Suddenly she fixed a searching gaze on the caretaker. "John, didn't you see Maxwell Martenet shortly before he—disappeared?"

John shook violently. He fixed startled eyes on her. He seemed to be trying hard to suppress an intense excitement. Then, with a dry chuckle, he clamped down the ash in his pipe. "You're a queer one, Miss Lane. What you driving at, anyhow?"

"Just this, John." Her voice was steady and very low. "Didn't Maxwell Martenet come here after he disappeared?"

A jerk passed through the caretaker's long, gaunt body. He rose, came over to where she sat, placed a hand on her shoulder, and asked in a husky voice: "Who are you, miss?"

Her large, hazel eyes were full upon him. She smiled faintly. "I've told you. I'm Viola Lane—that's all. Isn't it true, John? Didn't Maxwell Martenet come here?"

"No!" John's voice crackled with excitement. "No—no! Anyhow"—controlling himself with an effort—"if he did, I didn't see him."

For a moment longer her gaze searched his face. "I believe you, John. It's probable you didn't see him. But you had reason to think he came here. Isn't that so?"

"Maybe," said John, and slunk back to his seat. "A man living alone in a place like this gets to imagining all sorts of queer things."

"Then you imagined something about Maxwell Martenet? You needn't answer—I can see you did. Well, what about Hannan? What are you imagining about him?"

"Not a thing," said John stoutly. "I didn't even know he was missing till you told me."

For a moment longer she studied him with that calm, steady gaze which made John feel as if she were reading his unspoken thoughts. At length she lowered her eyes. "Oh," she said a little drowsily, "I believe you are being frank with me, as far as Hannan is concerned. Dear me, I'm beginning to feel sleepy. Do you really intend to sit up all night, John?"

He nodded grimly. His eyes fixed on the caked mud prints. "The skeesicks may come back." He seemed to be talking to himself. "There's no telling. If he does——"

"Mercy!" She gave an amused laugh. "You look as if you might treat him rough. But what about me? Aren't you just a bit suspicious of me, too?"

"You?" John grinned gingerly. She looked so slight and artless that he could see no reason why he shouldn't trust her. Yet she had said certain queer things that stuck in John's mind, and there were moments when her manner puzzled him. John was taking no chances. "If you're ready, Miss Lane, I'll show you to your room."

"Thanks, John. I'm getting terribly sleepy. Is this the way?" She opened the small door in the rear, the one guarded by Old Winthrop's watchful eyes in the oil painting.

"Hey, come back!" John called sharply. But already she stood in the little hall, a portion of it dimly illuminated by a wedge of light falling through the door.

"Why, what's the matter?" she asked simply. "Isn't this the way out? Where does that door lead?"

John gasped. With an air of frank curiosity she pointed down the little hall to the iron door. He reached out

his hand to jerk her back, but she eluded him and walked clear up to the door.

"What a funny old door!" she exclaimed. "Iron, isn't it? And dusty—ugh! You need a woman's refining touch in this house, John. I never saw such a——"

"Don't touch it!" John cried in a trembling voice, although she had already brushed her fingers lightly against the iron surface. "You've got to get out of here, miss. It really isn't safe."

"Safe?" She laughed incredulously. "Just as if an iron door could hurt anybody. What would happen if I opened it?"

"I don't know—something terr'ble. Get back, miss."

She gave him a mocking glance. "You make me very curious, John. What's inside?"

"Just a large room with cement walls and no windows. It was Old Winthrop's lab'ratory. Honest, miss, I wish you wouldn't——"

"I promise not to touch a thing. Is the door locked?"

"I—I don't know for sure. I never tried to open it. It hasn't been opened in seven years. It never will be, if I can help it."

"How mysterious!" She looked up toward the top of the door. "What a huge clock, John! What's it doing here, where nobody has occasion to look at it?"

"Can't tell you, miss. Don't know a thing about it. Come now, miss, it ain't healthy to look at these things."

"Just a minute." Her eyes were still on the immense clock imbedded in masonry above the door. "When do you wind it, John?"

John mopped his forehead. He was acutely worried. He did not know how to handle this inquisitive young person. Of course, she was doing no harm. There was no danger as long as one didn't attempt to open the door. Even in that event John was not clear in his mind what would happen, but he had an ingrained suspicion that it would be something dreadful. He stood in wholesome awe of the clock and the iron door. The atmosphere of this little hall always gave him a queasy feeling.

"When do you wind it?" asked Miss Lane again.

"Wind it? Why, I never——" He checked himself on the point of blurting out a secret.

Miss Lane looked at him curiously. "What's the matter, John? Are you ill? Shall I get you a glass of water?"

"No, I'm all right." John steadied himself. "It's kinda close in here—that's all. We'd better get out."

This time he seized the girl's arm and started to pull her away. She yielded reluctantly, but over her shoulder she was still looking at the clock. Suddenly she uttered a little gasp.

"Listen!" she cried.

John's hand fell limply to his side. He stood stonily still.

"Lands!" he exclaimed.

With a sudden recoiling movement, the girl clutched his arm. He heard a sharp intake of breath. She was trembling.

"Look, John!" she cried hoarsely, pointing a shaking finger at the door.

John looked. Something was crawling with an icy touch along his spine. Step by step he shrank back, Miss Lane following. Very slowly, an inch at a time, the iron door was opening outward. In a spasm of horror the girl pressed closer to him. Each passing moment, each jerky movement of the door touched their nerves like the clutch of some abominable thing. Farther and farther outward swung the door. Longer and more tortuously the seconds dragged. Blithely, melodiously the the clock ticked.

The girl screamed. She clung to John in an ecstasy of dread. Again her

hand rose, pointing shakily. For just a moment the flicker of a face was seen in the opening. It passed like a darting shadow, like some sudden and ephemeral apparition. Then a cry rose behind the door, a cry vibrant with the most horrible fear, the most unearthly agony. It leaped up to a shrill, piercing pitch, swelled hideously into great, far-surging volumes of sound—then stopped.

After a while John looked down at the girl in his arms. She had fainted. The door was closed again. The clock was still ticking—peacefully, joyously, as if nothing had happened.

To be continued in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE.

BIG CRIME SYNDICATE UNCOVERED

THE police of New York recently uncovered what is believed to be one of the biggest, most daring, most resourceful, and best organized crime syndicates in the annals of the metropolis. The leader of the organization, known as "Cowboy" Tessler, had developed an efficiency and perfection of coördination that placed him in the front rank of master criminals. However, like most malefactors, Tessler made the inevitable fatal mistake. In this instance the mistake was in allowing a member of his gang to remain in prison too long without having him bailed out, so that the gangster thought himself deserted by his chief and his pals. Accordingly the imprisoned gangster "squealed" and told all he knew of Cowboy Tessler and his crime syndicate.

Ten members of the band were immediately arrested, nine men and one woman, and were identified as the perpetrators of twenty-seven holdups in the course of a few months. Specialists and expert craftsmen in many lines were in the employ of the organization. One of their number is said to be the inventor of a special silencer, with which the revolvers carried by the members were equipped. Another man was the armorer who cared for the guns and pistols and fitted them with the silencers. His duty also was to disguise automobiles that the gang had stolen. In a loft on Fourth Avenue, the syndicate maintained a shooting gallery for exclusive target practice by the members. Visiting this place, the police found the walls pitted with revolver bullets; there were also numerous perforated tin cans which had been used as targets.

The rounding up of this gang is regarded by the police as one of their most noteworthy recent achievements.

PAINTS TOWN, THEN PAINTS JAIL

IN the course of a holiday celebration some months ago, Daniel Cossi went on a spree and painted the town; he was arrested for unlawful entry and was sentenced to serve eleven months and twenty-nine days in the Bronx County Jail, of New York. Cossi, a painter by trade, was shocked at the condition of the jail and persuaded the warden to let him paint it. He then set to work, decorating the corridors, mess room, recreation room, reception room and 104 cells with a coat of paint. When the job was finished, the warden was so pleased with the results, that he declared that so capable a painter should not be kept in jail. The sheriff, too, interested himself in Cossi's behalf, and as a result, Governor Smith pardoned him.

HONEYMOON

By Kenneth Duane Whipple

Author of "Please Forward," etc.

THE first bride and groom came aboard the *Michigan* a good half hour before she left the pier that cool fall afternoon on her Boston-to-Norfolk-to-Baltimore run. A typical pair of honeymooners they were, too, with every last one of the appurtenances, including half a dozen men and girls that kept pelting them all the way down the pier with rice and old shoes—regular movie stuff, you know. It was interesting to watch the pair.

I got a good look at the groom as they came up the gangplank. One of those handsome he-men, he was, with curly hair and light-blue eyes—just the sort a girl is supposed to fall for. The bride was busy ducking the rice, and I had just a glimpse of her face—inch deep in paint and powder, the way most of them are nowadays. One of the boyish flapper type, she was, but not half bad looking and dolled up in the latest. They made a handsome couple, and the whole passenger list fell for them right away—romance and all that sort of thing that people usually fall for.

The second bridal couple was a different proposition. They came aboard just before the gangplank was pulled up. He was a stocky, dark-complexioned chap, and she was a short, dumpy woman in a blue serge and a hat with flowers on it. To tell you the truth, we were out beyond Boston Light before we realized they were a bridal couple at all.

Of course, taking the boat quietly the way they did, without any of the usual wedding hubbub, the second pair of honeymooners didn't attract the attention the first ones did. Another reason, maybe, that so few noticed them was the stack of newspapers that came aboard just before we sailed. I remember afterwards that the boy wasn't

much ahead of them getting aboard the ship.

The big black type said:

DARING DAYLIGHT HOLDUP.
OLD COLONY TRUST COMPANY MESSENGER SHOT.
$50,000 HAUL.

You can imagine how close home that came to the Bostonians in the crowd, and there were quite a good many of them. There were even two old ladies aboard that banked there and had just drawn out their money for the trip that morning, to say nothing of an elderly couple that had taxied by the place within five minutes of the robbery.

I picked up a paper later on and read the story. I'm in Florida so much now that New England news doesn't hit me so hard. There weren't many details. The messenger was shot and the money was gone—that was about all. It had happened at two o'clock, at the corner of Tremont and Summer Streets, so quickly that the spectators apparently couldn't even agree on how many there were in the gang that made their get-away in the big sedan with the curtains drawn. A slick job, from all accounts.

I'd just finished skimming through what few facts there were when the whistle began to blow. I stuffed the paper in my pocket and wandered down toward the stern to see them cast off and to try and find Bill Simonds, who was going back down to Miami with me. He had a peach of a pair of binoculars, and I wanted to use them while we were going down the harbor.

The first bride and groom—Henry and Mary Brown, their names were—were looking out of their stateroom window with their arms around each other. They didn't pay any attention to the people going by and grinning—just stood there with foolish smiles on their faces. I looked along the pier, but I didn't see any of the bridal party. Apparently they'd used up all their rice and old shoes and beat it for home.

I located Bill in the smoking room, reading one of those extras. I asked him for a cigarette, and started to sit down for a minute.

Just then the door opened and in came groom No. 2. He was in blue serge, with a crocheted four-in-hand tie and yellow shoes. He wandered over and sat down beside us.

"You fellows get good staterooms?" he began right away. "We didn't get such a nice one, I guess. It's No. 13, down on the main deck next to the dining saloon. Of course, coming on board at the last minute the way we did, we were lucky to get that. Say, excuse me for talking so much, but I'm a little excited. We just got married this noon—it's an elopement, you see. My name's Jones—Frank Jones. I want you to meet Jane—that's my wife, you know—sometime along. One of the nicest little women——"

He rambled on and on, with Bill and me trying to look interested. The only thing he said that stuck in my mind was that about the stateroom. I knew No. 13 on the *Michigan*, and it sure was a stuffy little place—an inside room on a narrow corridor, right where you'd get the kitchen odors and everything. I couldn't help contrasting it with the room the other honeymooners had. Theirs was No. 57, directly overhead on the promenade deck—a lovely big room, with bed-berth and shower bath and a window opening out on deck.

The talkative bridegroom finally excused himself to go and find his wife. When he'd gone, Bill looked at me kind of funny.

"'Elopement, eh?" he said. "He's old enough to know better, or I miss my guess. Where do you suppose they're headed for—Florida, too?"

"Washington, more likely," I said.

"That's the honeymooners' paradise. Besides, didn't you hear him say his tickets were for Baltimore? You know we go on up the Chesapeake after that stop-over at Norfolk."

About that time the first call for supper came, and we went down. Of course, with the natural curiosity the whole boat was showing, we took a look around for the bridal couples.

We didn't have far to look for the Browns. They'd been fixed up as you'd expect, with one of the little tables for two over at the side of the dining saloon. The bride had on another outfit out of her trousseau, and she certainly did look like a million dollars to me.

"Too much like a marble statue plastered with paint and powder," commented Bill. "None of those cold-eyed, hard-faced janes for mine. Give me a sweet little feminine——"

I kicked him under the table. The Joneses were just coming down the stairway. It didn't look as if there was a vacant seat in the saloon.

"Watch our talkative friend get stung," I said.

We could see the steward start to shake his head before Jones had even spoken to him. He was still shaking it when Jones, with his hand in his pocket, leaned over and said something in the fellow's ear.

There was a crisp "V" showing between the steward's fingers as he let Mr. and Mrs. Jones past us to a little table just beyond the front of the stairway. Bill and I stared at each other.

"Not so dumb, after all," said Bill.

"Wonder where he gets all his coin," I said. "He sure isn't my idea of a big butter-and-egg man."

We were getting pretty well out now, and it was beginning to kick up good and rough. People were getting up from the tables by ones and twos and trying to make a dignified exit. There were some that stayed with the menu clear down to the ice cream, but there were others that didn't get more than one sip of their clam bouillon.

Groom No. 1 was among the first to go, for all his husky he-man appearance. He took it slowly and stately, as if he was going up after his cigarette case or something, but he couldn't fool me—I've taken that trip too often and seen too many of 'em.

You can imagine the commiserating glances turned on the bride left alone at her little table that way. It was sort of an awkward position for him to leave her in. I wasn't surprised when she got up a few minutes later and started for the upper deck, though she didn't look the least bit seasick.

And right here a funny thing happened. Mary Brown had just reached the foot of the stairway when a big wave hit the *Michigan*. The boat tilted and Mary lost her equilibrium. She put out one hand to steady herself, missing the railing, and gave a wild lurch. Like a flash Frank Jones was out of his seat at the foot of the stairs—leaving his own bride cold, mind you—and was holding Mary Brown in his arms like a long-lost sweetheart.

We all gave his wife credit for playing up. But before she could get out of her seat and take Mary Brown's other arm, who should come staggering gamely down once more but Husband Henry!

Well, that made a darn funny tableau, and I don't mean maybe. It lasted long enough for all of us that were left to get an eyeful, too. Then Henry Brown, looking pretty well upset, came down a couple more steps, staring at his bride of a few hours in the arms of another, like they do in the movies.

"You cad!" he exclaimed in that play-acting voice that went with the rest of his make-up. "What do you mean by this?"

There didn't seem to be any good answer to that one under the circum-

stances, and Friend Frank appeared to realize it. He took his arm away and backed off, looking as if he had just remembered something. And before Henry could come down off his theatrical high horse, Mrs. Jones had her arm around Mrs. Brown and was helping her right up past him.

"There, there, deary," I heard her soothing the flapper bride, who was holding back and looking mad enough to bite nails. "Let me come up with you and see if there isn't something I can do for you. You know we brides must stick together. Men are awful dumb sometimes—don't you think so?"

You can imagine about where Bridegroom Jones fitted in the rest of the evening, as far as his bridal tour was concerned. He sat in the smoking room, reading one of those extras over and over and looking as if he'd lost his last friend. And from a fragment I overheard through the window of stateroom 57 when I went on deck, I judged that Bridegroom Brown was in the same boat.

"You fool! Why didn't you tell me how easy you got seasick? Do you think I'd have taken you——"

"I never did before. It must be that indigestion I've had this week. Just wait till to-morrow and see if I'm not——"

"Yes, and you pulling that 'Sir, how dare you!' stuff in front of the whole dining room. What's your idea of a honeymoon, anyway—to attract all the attention you can?"

"Well, you didn't want that chap pawing you all over, did you? I thought——"

"Yes, sir, it certainly sounded like a rough night all around. In fact, I don't know when I ever saw any bridal couples getting off to any poorer start than these two sets of honeymooners.

The next morning found us pretty well down the coast. It was foggy and gray, with long, greasy swells coming in from somewhere out in the Atlantic and a mean, sickly roll to the ship. The Joneses didn't show up for breakfast, and the Browns were missing at dinner. So was a good third of the passenger list, for that matter.

It was just after dinner that Jones reported the mysterious hole in the ceiling of room 13. I'd had seconds on the cantaloupe sundae, so I happened to overhear the start of it. Mrs. Jones was still sitting at the table, too, when her husband came hurrying out of his stateroom and nailed the steward.

The three of them trailed back into No. 13, looking more or less upset. I got up and sauntered down the corridor after them.

The door was ajar and I took a quick look inside. There was an irregular shaped hole in the ceiling, over in the corner above the upper berth, and Jones was pointing at it.

"It must have been rats, mustn't it?" he was saying. "And my wife's scared to death of them—aren't you, Jane? Do you mean to tell me that this ship——"

"There's not a rat aboard," said the steward. "This ship's as free from them as any of the best. And how do you think a rat would gnaw through a flooring like that?"

"What would you rather call it than rats?" said Bridegroom Jones, giving him a nasty look. "Do you have your staterooms equipped with peepholes as well as portholes? If you think that just because we had to take our honeymoon trip in No. 13 it's all right for us to put up with——"

He saw me outside then and stopped, and the three of them turned to look, so I had to mosey along and didn't hear the outcome. But I judged by the snappy service the Joneses got the rest of the trip that the steward had given their waiter the word to pass them along the best there was. That held good for the Browns also. I heard they

were quite upset when they found out about it, though I understand they didn't say as much.

The hole was plugged up, but the mystery of how it got there was still wide open, as far as I was concerned.

"Do you know what I think?" Bill Simonds said that afternoon when I told him. "I'll bet that guy Jones is the bird that robbed the Old Colony Trust yesterday afternoon."

"You're cuckoo," I said. "Whatever put a crazy idea like that into your head?"

"He might even be the Taunton Kid," went on Bill, puffing hard on his cigar the way he does when he gets excited. "It's just the kind of a slick job, you know, the Kid's always pulling off."

"The Taunton Kid?" I said. "Who's he?"

Bill gave me a sarcastic grin.

"That just goes to show," he said, "that those Florida papers are too full of boom stuff to print any real news. Why, he's a clever yegg that has put over half a dozen big jobs up here in New England in the last year or so. Sort of a superbandit, you know—slick lightning-change artist, dead shot, and all that sort of thing. Every cop in Massachusetts has been looking for him since he killed Chief Gregory out in Chelsea last March and got away with ten thousand from the Travelers Bank."

"Does Jones look like him?" I asked.

"I don't know," said Bill. "But that doesn't make any difference. A guy with as much brains as the Taunton Kid——"

"Rats!" I said. "If that hick is the Taunton Kid, I'm a wild Indian. And besides——"

"But look here," broke in Bill, puffing hard again. "There's something queer about that couple; you know that as well as I do. In the first place, why do they keep harping on the elopement? That pair hasn't any more romance than a couple of fried oysters. Why, she isn't even pretending to stay with him. Look how she's hanging around that other bride all the time!"

I shook my head.

"That doesn't mean a thing," I said, "except that they've both had scraps with their husbands."

"Yes, and see how easy it would have been for them to slip on board like that at the last minute," went on Bill, not paying any attention to me. "Nobody'd think of accusing a pair of honeymooners. And what's that hole in the ceiling of their stateroom for, if not so somebody can spy on them and locate the fifty thousand. Say, there's probably somebody on board trailing them. I'll bet if you watch stateroom 57 when the Browns are out of it, you'll see somebody with a skeleton key——"

"It's a good thing you're going south this winter to give that active brain of yours a good long rest," I said. "Now I'll tell one that's half as long as yours and twice as sensible."

"Yes, you will," said Bill.

"Frank Jones and Mary Brown were childhood sweethearts," I said. "Coincidence threw them together on their honeymoon. Frank saw his chance to speak to Mary on the stairs, and Henry recognized him from a picture Mary had shown him. Now Henry is jealous as fury at Frank and Mary; Mary's sore at Henry for making a scene; Frank is scared to speak to either of the women; and Jane isn't any too well pleased with Frank. And the Taunton Kid, with his automatic in one hand and the fifty thousand in the other, is headed for the great open spaces."

"Raspberries!" exclaimed Bill. "That may explain why the two men are on the outs, but it certainly doesn't explain why Jane Jones is trailing Mary Brown all over the ship and being so chummy with her."

"The actions of women," I said, "are

not dependent upon any recognized logical process."

"So's your old man," muttered Bill. "Tell me this, then: What is Jones hanging around the wireless room all the time for? And what's the hole in the ceiling got to do with it all?"

I couldn't seem to think of any comeback for those two, so I picked up my magazine and gave an imitation of a man reading a story. But no matter how I tried to concentrate, that idea of the fifty thousand being on board kept coming back to me, even though Bill's theory didn't fit the facts.

It didn't explain, either, an odd thing we saw in Norfolk the next morning. We docked before nine o'clock there, and weren't due to go out till four. A few of the Baltimore passengers stayed on board, but most of us got off and took a trip uptown, just to kill time.

Neither Henry Brown nor Frank Jones left the boat. You'd have thought either one of them would have welcomed the chance to get away from the other, the way they'd been acting. But Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Jones went, and went together.

They made an odd-looking pair—Mrs. Brown all enameled and powdered up, with her short skirt and little tight-fitting hat pulled down over her face, and Mrs. Jones in that frumpy-looking blue serge and with her hair done in a sort of pompadour. It made the younger bride a little conspicuous, having the older one tag her around the way she did. She was too polite, though, or too good-natured, or too something, to snub her, though you could see she wasn't crazy over the idea. But not having made any other friends on the boat, and being on the outs with her husband——

But I started to tell you about the funny thing that happened uptown. Bill and I were wandering around when we saw the two women just ahead of us, going down Granby Street. They crossed over and went into a big department store on the corner. We weren't more than ten feet behind them.

"Look!" said Bill. "One of them's dropped a bundle."

The revolving door was still whirling, and there was a package outside it on the granite flagging. I bent down to pick it up—and walloped my head good and hard against the head of a portly old party in a gray knicker suit and a golf cap that had appeared from nowhere at all.

We were both reaching for the bundle, but I was a split second ahead of him, and got my hands on it. It was a long, fairly thin packet, well wrapped up—felt like a bundle of printed matter of some kind.

The old gentleman was holding out his hand when I straightened up.

"Thank you for recovering my parcel, sir," he said. "I had no more than crossed the street when I missed it, and by good fortune looked back and saw it lying here."

I stared at him with my mouth open, I guess. The nerve of him took me right off my feet. But Bill spoke up promptly.

"I'm afraid you're mistaken," he said. "That belongs to some ladies that just went into the store. We saw them drop it."

The old gent gave Bill a frosty stare.

"I am familiar with a variety of confidence games," he said, "but I must confess that this is a new one to me. May I ask what you expect to gain by any such palpable falsehood?"

It was Bill's turn to stare now. The old bird made another pass at the package, but I had a tight grip on it, and he didn't get it. I was beginning to feel sore.

"Look here," I said. "If you don't believe us——"

Just then some one behind us said, "Oh!" and Bill and I pivoted like a

couple of weather vanes. Mrs. Jones had just come out of the store and was standing there, her eyes bright and her cheeks flushed as if she had been hurrying.

"I'm so glad you gentlemen found my package," she said. "I was down in the bargain basement when I missed it, and I hurried back just as fast as I could. Did you see me drop it?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Bill. "We'd just crossed the street when you went in."

Mrs. Jones took a long breath and gave a sort of relieved smile.

"Wasn't it lucky, though?" she burst out. "Thank you so much—both of you."

I swung around triumphantly.

"There, now," I said. "What's the idea of your trying to——"

I stopped with a gasp, and Bill looked more than a little startled. The old fellow in the gray knickers had just naturally evaporated—not a sign of him anywhere. And when we turned around again to explain, we had another shock. Mrs. Jones had also disappeared.

Of course, it was only natural that she would hurry back, in order not to keep Mrs. Brown waiting. But it did give a mighty queer effect, both of them vanishing like that. And it set Bill's imagination working harder than ever.

"Didn't I tell you?" he said, as soon as we were down the street a little. "That was the fifty thousand, you dumb-bell—and you had it right in your hands! Why didn't you hang onto it and yell for the cops?"

"Yes—why didn't I?" I jeered. "And have the police open it up and find a couple packages of envelopes or something? I'd look sweet then, wouldn't I? You don't suppose for a minute, do you, Bill, that a real crook is as careless as all that with his loot? Look how near Mrs. Jones came to losing it!"

Bill shook his head and puffed hard on his cigar.

"That was the money just the same," he said stubbornly. "It must have been. Now look here——"

I couldn't see Bill's second theory any better than I could the first, and I told him so. But my own ideas got the stiffest kind of a jolt after we were back on the boat that afternoon, about half an hour before we cast off for the night trip up the bay.

I was standing there in front of the wheelhouse, looking out across the harbor. The sun was getting pretty well down, and there was a brisk breeze blowing. The Joneses were alone up in the bow of the *Michigan*—almost the first time they'd been seen together since the trip started. They were leaning against the rail and talking together as chummy and earnest as you please. And the first thing I knew the breeze freshened a little and their words came clear to me.

"Right in my hands!" Mrs. Jones was saying over and over, in a sort of hopeless, despairing voice. "Right in my hands—and now it's gone! It's gone!"

"That's all right," said her husband. "We'll make up for that. Never mind."

"But I do mind!" she said, almost crying. "I can't help minding! When I think what an easy mark I was—and after all the luck I had, too. We might have made good with that, both of us. Just think of it, Leonard! Fifty thou——"

"Hush!" said Jones, taking a quick look around.

I moved off as unconcernedly as I could, feeling as conspicuous as a freshie at a hazing. This new slant gummed up the whole works. I couldn't make any sense out of it at all. And it didn't exactly help when I caught a glimpse down on the pier, just before we cast off, of the old gent in the gray knickers that we'd seen uptown.

I tried to find Bill and point the fel-

low out to him, but Bill had sneaked away. I found out later he'd been having a smoke with Henry Brown and trying to pump him a little about the Joneses. He didn't show up until the last whistle had blown and the gangplank had been lifted and we were pretty well out through Hampton Roads.

You know how the Norfolk harbor is—a regular lane of buoys. There's little chaps, and medium-sized whistling affairs, and big fellows with bells like a church steeple. The *Michigan* plowed along up the line, meeting a couple of big boats and passing two or three smaller ones. There was a launch that looked for a time as if it were going to pass us, but apparently changed its mind and stuck close to our wake.

Bill and I sat in our deck chairs watching the sunset. The wind was still freshening, and the sun was going down into a bank of crimson clouds almost astern. Around it there seemed to be a sort of bright-red haze, and its reflection on the water was a weird, scarlet hue.

We hadn't been sitting there long when Henry and Mary Brown came out of their stateroom and wandered down the line past the rows of chairs. Pretty soon along strolled the Joneses, looking more human than they had since the trip started. I winked at Bill.

"Reckon they've kissed and made up," I said. "Do you suppose——"

All at once there was a terrible scream. We jumped out of our chairs and dashed toward the stern. There stood Henry Brown by the rail—alone.

He couldn't seem to get out any words for a minute—just stood gasping and pointing. Then all at once his breath came back to him.

"Help!" he shouted. "Help! Man overboard!"

The others came crowding around him. Bill grabbed him by the arm.

"What's happened?" he demanded.

Henry Brown pointed to the dusky red wake, leading back toward the setting sun like a crimson highway to Hades.

"Mary!" he cried. "My wife! She slipped and fell—and I can't swim."

There was a flash of white and a splash. Nobody had noticed Frank Jones slipping off his coat and shoes, or seen him climb up on the rail; half of us didn't see him when he dived. He came up again in a second, and struck out with a crawl that fairly ate up distance.

By this time they'd stopped the engines and were getting ready to lower a boat. I don't know how I happened to remember Bill's glasses. He didn't even know when I took them.

I focused them on Jones, and found him plowing through the little whitecaps. Then I lifted them a little to see if I could pick up the girl.

It gave me a start to see her swimming strong. Somehow you never think of women as being able to take care of themselves in the water that way. She was making for a big buoy almost opposite the place she'd gone overboard. Before Jones could get there she had reached it and was pulling herself up on the iron framework.

By now it was getting pretty dusky, but the buoy stood out against the crimson sea and sky like a black spider's web. I saw Mary Brown go up the framework, hand over hand, like a sailor going up a rope, and drape herself around the bell in what looked like a faint. I saw Henry Jones surge in to the foot of the buoy and climb like a monkey over the ironwork. But when I saw her turn and deliberately kick his hands when he tried to pull himself up after her, I took the glasses down and gave them a rub with my handkerchief. There wasn't any sense in seeing things like that through them.

The *Michigan's* engines were reversed by then. We were plowing back

toward the buoy, and one of the ship's boats was pulling hard for it. But I wasn't paying any attention to what was going on around me. I was watching with the glasses clamped against my eyes and wondering if I wasn't dreaming the whole nightmarish affair.

You've no idea how unreal it looked through the binoculars—that circle of red cloud and water, with the black skeleton of the buoy rocking and plunging and the two dark figures clinging to it, and with a vague suggestion in the background of the launch I'd seen following us up the bay. For Frank Jones, in spite of the girl, had somehow pulled himself up, and the two stood facing each other across the top of the buoy.

Whatever chivalrous ideas he'd had toward Mary Brown the night he put him arm around her on the stairs, he certainly hadn't any now. The minute he got his footing he made a pass at her with his fist that would have knocked her into the bay—if it had landed. But it didn't land. The girl, balancing against the swing of the buoy, ducked it and came back with a left jab that took Jones square on the nose.

There wasn't any science to the half-minute mix-up that followed, but there was enough action to make up. Jones was doing his best to clinch and was taking all kinds of punishment. But pretty soon he connected with a right to the jaw and a left to the solar plexus. His opponent went limp across the iron railing, and Jones reached over and got a good grip just as the other was sliding off into the water.

By this time the ship's boat had reached the buoy, and a couple of the men were climbing up it. Jones handed his victim over to them and stopped to fumble around the bell a minute before he followed them down. They were halfway back to the ship before I noticed that the bell had started ringing again. I hadn't even realized that it had stopped. And it wasn't until a whole lot later that I remembered how the launch that followed us out from Norfolk had veered off and made for the far side of the bay.

They kept the crowd back while two of the crew came over the rail, with Mary Brown limp and bedraggled between them. Frank Jones was close behind, dripping wet and with his nose on one side, but grinning all over his damp, homely face. There was a look of triumph in his eyes.

"Into the stateroom, boys," he said, "and a little smelling salts for the lady wouldn't be a bad idea. Captain, I'll want a guard for both of them from here to Baltimore. I don't know yet whether that actor chap my wife has her eye on yonder is one of the gang, or whether they just hired him for the occasion. And will you have this put in the safe and be responsible for it, please?"

He took out of his side pocket a long package, wrapped in oilcloth. There was a slip-noose in the end of the string tied around it. I knew where I'd seen a package of that size and shape before.

"It's the stuff from the Old Colony Trust," he went on. "They tried to pass it on at Norfolk. My wife tricked them and got her hands on it, but it was stolen from her again before she could even look in it. I was sure when the switch failed they'd try something new before they got to Baltimore. There was a warrant waiting there, and they knew it. That was a slick idea, though, tying it to the bell clapper for the launch to pick up."

"Couldn't you have acted sooner, Inspector Stevenson?" asked the captain. He seemed to know all about it, though the other ship's officers looked as blank as the rest of us.

Frank Jones—I'll still call him that—shook his head.

"We weren't sure, you see,' he said.

"All we had to start with at headquarters, half an hour before the boat sailed, was this half-baked tip on the wedding party. So the big chief let me and my wife—she's matron there, you know—take a chance on faking a wedding party of our own, hoping we might get next to them. But they were a slick pair; I have to hand it to them. Never a sign that would make us sure; never a word that we could act positively on, even after we'd bored that hole from 13 up into 57. It's the truth that my first sight of the loot was when I unfastened it from the buoy."

"I don't see why you had to be so rough with her, though," said an Oxford-bagged juvenile resentfully. "Even if she was a thief, you didn't need to beat her up, did you—a young girl like that?"

Frank Jones' twisted, triumphant grin broadened.

"Young girl, nothing!" he said. "That's the Taunton Kid. I found that out as soon as I got a good look at him with the powder and make-up soaked off—I've seen too many 'Dead or Alive' handbills with his face on 'em since last January."

OREGON FUGITIVES CAPTURED

THE three companions of "Oregon" Jones, who made their escape from the penitentiary at Salem, Oregon, after Jones had been shot and killed by one of the prison guards, have finally been recaptured. Tom Murray was caught by a ruse in a hotel at Centralia, Washington. Philip Carson, of Portland, Oregon, recognized Murray in Vancouver, Washington, and persuaded him to accompany him to Centralia on the pretext of robbing a road house. After taking Murray to a hotel room, Carson summoned police officers, and Murray submitted to arrest without offering resistance.

Murray had separated at White Salmon, Washington, from his two companions and partners in the escape, James Willos and Ellsworth Kelly, agreeing to rejoin them later in the East. Willos and Kelly were recaptured at about the same time as Murray. They were in a ravine near Portland in an automobile by the roadside, when they were made prisoners.

MILK BOTTLE MORE DEADLY WEAPON THAN GUN

THAT the pen is mightier than the sword is an adage that has been proved through the ages, but it remained for Salvatore Rollo, a milk-wagon driver, of Brooklyn, New York, to prove the modern instance that the milk bottle is mightier than the gun. Rollo recently had the experience of being held up by a gunman who demanded his money. The milkman pretended to be submissive and made a movement as though to produce his wallet to hand it over. As he did so, his captor lowered his weapon for a moment, and Rollo took advantage of the opportunity to swing his serving case of milk bottles at the man's head, knocking him down. Then Rollo jumped on the bandit and took away his gun, while a watchman who had witnessed the incident telephoned for the police.

WHAT REALLY HAPPENED

By Charles J. Dutton

Author of "Peter and His Little Black Bag," etc.

IF the newspapers of the city told the truth regarding their circulations, then at least one hundred thousand people saw the glaring headlines—headlines which ran across the front page:

RED ELKINS CAPTURED LAST NIGHT.

Nation Wide Search Ended.

Henry Richards, Well-known Shoe Merchant, Will Receive Six Thousand Dollars Reward.

After the hundred thousand had read the headlines, they turned at once to the news story below.

The nation-wide search for Red Elkins, the famous criminal for whom the police of the entire country have been searching for the last six months, ended last night at the local police station, when the much-wanted man was brought in unconscious. He had attempted to rob the well-known State Street shoe merchant, Henry Richards. Mr. Richards, returning home at ten o'clock, after a visit with a friend, was held up by Elkins on Chestnut Street, near State. After a desperate struggle, which resulted in the robber being knocked unconscious, the police came on the scene and took both men to the station. There the identity of the holdup man was established as Red Elkins. Mr. Richards will receive the reward of six thousand dollars which was offered to any one who captured the famous criminal. Mr. Richards was very modest in his account of the struggle which took place, saying that any other man would have done the same, and that if he had known that the man who held him up was Elkins, he would have acted as he did. He is to-day receiving the congratulations of his friends for his bravery, and it is said a public testimonial will be given him.

Red Elkins——

This was the account which the papers of the city published on Sunday morning. It was read with bated breath, and many were the people who wondered how Mr. Richards had dared fight back against a holdup man. This was also the story which reached every part of the country. After all it was

the kind of a story the newspapers love, and the kind people enjoy reading—the tale of a brave man, who had captured a much-wanted criminal. It was a wonderful news item, which the papers played up for all it was worth. It made Henry Richards a national figure—for a few days at least.

What really happened—was something far different from the headlines.

A little after six o'clock, on Saturday evening, Henry Richards was very leisurely locking the front door of his shoe store. He was wishing with all his heart that it was the custom in his city for shoe stores to be open Saturday evenings. Then he would not have to go home at six o'clock. If there was one thing which Henry Richards did not wish to do—it was go home. The feeling was all due to a telephone message from his wife, early in the afternoon. The message had been:

"Henry, I want you home right after six to-night. Mother has come for a week."

It was not that Henry did not like his mother-in-law. He did like her—when she was a long way off. He had a great deal of real admiration for the manner in which the lady got what she wished from life. Yet Henry knew, from long conversations, that she did not approve of him. For the daughter of a federal judge to have married the owner of a shoe store, his wife's mother had more than once informed him, was a decided step downward in the social scale.

Henry's mother-in-law was a rather large woman, decidedly aggressive, while Henry did not weigh more than one hundred and thirty, being one of the most retiring men in the city. Crowds frightened him, and one could notice his Adam's apple moving nervously when he was suddenly addressed.

As he locked the door of his shop, he sighed. For the next week he would be dragged out to musicales—and he hated music—to social affairs, where, what was worse, he would have to put on his dress suit. As he turned up the street, he expressed his feelings with the only oath he ever used, an emphatic "damn!"

As he walked along, he thought sadly of the detective story he had expected to finish that evening. The detective was getting rather close to the criminal, and he had a very good idea who the criminal would turn out to be. He turned up the concrete walk to his house, and there was no pleasure in his heart. As a rule it gave him a bit of a thrill when the lights of his home came in view far down the street. He might be shy and small and all that, but he was a good business man, with a home of which he was not ashamed. But there was no thrill in his heart this evening. Softly he inserted the key in the door and stepped into the hall. A moment later his wife came rushing from the rear of the house, her finger on her lips. With a kiss she said,

"Be quiet, Henry. Mother is resting after her trip, and we will eat alone."

It was a more silent dinner than was the rule; more than once Henry cast a quick glance at the door of the dining room, expecting to see his mother-in-law appear. She would kiss him, and then for the next hour he would hear all about her trip on the cars. From past experience he knew the telling would last an hour. The meal was finished without any interruptions. Pushing back his chair, he rose and went into what he called his den, a small room filled with bookcases, and easy chairs. He sank into the nearest chair and picked up a book from the stand. Fate in the person of his wife was against him. He had no sooner lit his pipe and turned to the unread page, when she appeared in the doorway.

"Henry," she said, "do you think you could go over to Mr. Davis', and get a

bottle of his wine? You know he said he would give you some. And a little wine would do mother good."

As a rule, after he had returned from the store, he was content to stay home and read. For once, at the suggestion of his wife to go out, he placed his book aside without a word. His wife fussed over him a little, in the manner women have when they send their husbands on a two-mile journey for something they do not really need. Even after he was on the sidewalk, he heard her voice from the door. As he did not distinguish her words, he turned and waved —but did not stop.

Davis lived on the other side of the city, a good two miles away. Henry did not take the street cars or drive his auto. Instead he walked down through the residential section, and then for two blocks through the brightly lighted business street. Here he was forced to bow to person after person, for Henry Richards had lived all of his forty years in the same small city, and knew almost every one.

As he walked along, he did what he so often did, though he would have died before he admitted it to any one. Day-dreaming is what the psychologists call it. Yet he was only trying to figure out in what period of the past life of the world he would have cared to live. There was always a conflict in his mind. The days of the French Revolution were very attractive; again there were those golden days of Drake and Hawkins in England, the days when a man could sail new seas.

Those who noticed him as he walked along, saw only the little shoe merchant they knew. Henry Richards really saw no one; he was rescuing Marie Antoinette from the mob in the Paris streets, or watching with Drake on the cliffs as the Spanish Armada swept up the channel.

He was still unsettled as to the period in which he would have cared to have lived, when he went up the steps of his friend's house and rang the bell. In a moment the door was flung open, and the big burly frame of his friend stood before him. He gave one look at Henry, clapped him on the shoulder and invited him into the house. A moment later he was being taken into the kitchen with the words:

"Henry, old scout, I am sure glad to see you. The wife is out. I am taking you into the kitchen, so you can try that wine I told you about. I have three hundred bottles in the cellar which you must see."

After Henry had told the object of his visit, nothing would do, but that he should go down in the cellar and see his friend's stock. The two men descended the winding stairs. Behind the coal bin, Davis threw out his hands with the proud words:

"Did you ever see anything better than that?"

There were three hundred bottles, stacked upon a row of shelves, bottles of all shapes and sizes, bottles which Davis told him contained the best home-made wine in the city. Long before the two men returned to the kitchen, Henry had heard the story of every bottle, how the wine had been made, and where the grapes and elderberries had been secured. When they went upstairs, two bottles were with them—only one of which Henry was to take home.

After the wine had been sampled, the two men started to talk. With his few friends, Henry was almost a conversationalist. And Davis was a friend—a very good friend. Like Henry, he also read mystery stories. For a while they discussed several which they had just finished. Then being two amateur criminologists—though all their knowledge had been gained through the detective stories they read—they began to talk about "Red" Elkins.

After all, there was nothing startling in this. Red Elkins was very much in

the public eye at that moment. From the day he had escaped from a federal prison, until he pulled off his big bank robbery, the front pages of the papers had contained little but stories about him. Every new crime was, of course, laid at his door, and every day he was reported to have been seen in some part of the country; reported, but that was all. Just where he had gone, the police could not say.

Henry and his friend had their own theories. As they warmed into their discussion, they both expressed their opinion of the police, and laughed at the idea the police could capture him. Red had far more brains than the police, and it was absurd to think he was still in the country. Davis was sure he had gone to Canada or Mexico. Henry felt that he had shipped for Europe. Both laughed at the idea of the police capturing him.

For over an hour, both men pictured what they would do if they were in Elkins' place, and how they would make their get-away. Henry said he would dye the red hair black, grow a mustache and wait in some little country place until he could sail for Europe. Davis was very keen for getting an airplane and flying to Mexico. For over an hour the two men romanced, until the striking of a clock warned Henry that it was ten, time he was home.

As he rose to his feet, his friend dug up a newspaper and wrapped it around the bottle of wine which he thrust under Henry's arm. The shoe merchant left. As he went down the street, he realized he should have been home an hour before. The bottle of wine under his arm bothered him a bit, for he pictured some prohibition agent coming along and recognizing what he had. Purposely he kept to the dark side of the street, as close to the buildings as he could. He was not daydreaming this time, not with a bottle of wine under his arm.

Coming out of the business section, he gave a little sigh of relief to reach the long residential block, where neither the lights nor the people were very numerous. Just as he reached the very middle of the block, he had a shock. A young man, coming down the street, stopped him. For a second Henry thought of prohibition agents, and his heart sank, The young man's words assured him.

"Can you give me a match?" the man asked, and his voice was not unpleasant.

With relief at the request, Henry reached into his pocket and found a card of matches, which he handed to the waiting man. As the latter reached out to take it, he seemed to stumble, and his hand swept across Henry's vest. The young man recovered himself in a second, apologizing as he accepted the matches. Then he started slowly toward the business section. He had gone but several feet, when some subconscious thought caused Henry to put his hand in his vest pocket for his watch. It was not there. Even as he fumbled for it, there came the sickening realization that he would not find it.

If there was one thing which Henry Richards always had in his pocket, it was his watch. Now it was gone. When he reached home he would have to say that it was lost. What was worse—the watch had been given him by his mother-in-law. Once a grateful client had given his wife's father the costly gold watch. For some reason it had been given to Henry when the judge died. The giver had not yet stopped informing Henry of her gift. As he thought of going home without it, he felt sick. How *could* he have lost it? At that second he remembered how the man had brushed against him when he handed him the matches.

Like a flash it was all clear to him. The asking for the matches had been a blind. When the man's hand swept over

his vest he had picked his pocket. At this thought he turned to see if the man was still in sight. With his first glance he saw him, not far away, leaning against a fence, seemingly trying to light a cigarette. At the same time Henry saw something else—two policemen, slowly coming up from the business section. The sight of the policemen gave him courage.

Without thinking, he turned and started down the block in the direction of the young man, who apparently had not yet managed to get a light. He did not seem to be hurrying very much, for his face was bent down to the cupped hands. Several times the match went out. As Henry came within arm's length of the young man, who had straightened at the sound of the approaching footsteps, it is to be doubted if he knew just what he would do. That the young man had the watch, he was sure; that he might make trouble was very likely. Again the two policemen were getting very close. All at once it flashed into Henry's mind, to tap the man on the shoulder and ask him to return the watch. If he did, he would say nothing to the police.

With this in mind, he reached out and tapped the young man on the shoulder. It was not a very hard tap. Henry had just started to stammer out, "Give me my——"

The result was startling. Like a flash the young man wheeled around, and for a moment Henry saw a face filled with horror and rage. The man's lips drew back as he tried to shake off the clutching hand. Henry had discovered that simply to ask the pickpocket to return his watch was not enough. He would have to hold him until the police arrived.

As the man tried to shake off Henry's hand he snarled out something. He might have broken loose, but in some unknown manner the fingers of the shoe merchant had become tangled in the collar. Then, as Henry looked, he saw something which filled him with horror. He saw the man's hand go down to the hip pocket and come forth with something that gave a glitter in the semidarkness. It was a gun—and without doubt a gun which would be used.

Barely knowing what he was doing, terrified by what he was afraid would happen, Henry tried for a moment to flee. There was no place toward which to flee. Then, as the man lurched at him—without knowing just what he was doing—Henry swung the bottle of wine he had in his hand. He swung it violently and wildly.

There came a crash, and to his surprise, the man slumped down to the sidewalk as the breaking glass crashed to the ground. The next second he saw the two policemen coming on a dead run.

Now in all that had happened, there is just one thing which we can say Henry Richards did deliberately. He had hit the pickpocket on the head with the bottle of wine and knocked him out. That was an accident, the man's head getting in the way of his violent swing. But there was one thing he did, which was deliberate. He saw the policemen almost at hand—and he remembered his watch. Dropping to his knees, he fumbled at the vest of the silent figure, felt a watch and transferred it to his own pocket. He had just risen to his feet when the first policeman grasped his arm, crying:

"What does you'se think you'se doing—sticking up people like this?"

Earnestly and very heatedly, for him, he insisted that the man, still silent upon the ground, had tried to rob him. This was met with a decided air of disbelief by both policemen. He then gave his name, only to be horrified to learn that he would be taken to the station, where he could tell it to the desk sergeant.

Commanding a passing car, the po-

licemen threw Henry inside, and then placed the unconscious young man beside him. A policeman sat between them; he said nothing during the ride.

It was not a happy ride for Henry. He groaned when he thought of his wife, waiting his return, waiting for the wine which was now gone. He shuddered at the thought of telling his mother-in-law, that he had been arrested. It was a most unhappy shoe merchant, who was pulled out of the car at the police station and dragged through the lighted doorway into a big room. Behind a desk, in the room, was sitting a very large police official.

The desk sergeant raised his eyes in surprise as the policeman pushed shrinking Henry to the desk. His glance went over the small frame, and then back to the young man, who was now rather violently protesting to the officer who gripped his arm. Then the sergeant turned to the policeman who held Henry and asked,

"What is it all about?"

The policeman cast a glance at his captive and grinned. "Nothing, except this wild Indian beaned the other chap on the head with a bottle on Chestnut Street."

The desk sergeant gave Henry a look, then glanced back to the struggling young man. As he looked, his jaw dropped, and his eyes grew big. With a jump he flung open his desk and brought into sight a black revolver—a revolver which made Henry's eyes blink. Then he exclaimed:

"Man! Do you know whom you have there? Red Elkins!"

At the police officer's words, Henry's knees grew very limp, and the turned to look at the defiant young man, now pushed up to the desk. His hat had been snatched off; the red hair was streaked with home-made wine, and a brighter crimson fluid. As Henry looked, he moved several feet away, not caring for the manner in which the famous criminal glared at him. Then, with the policemen casting looks at him, Henry began to wonder what they would do with him.

He soon found out.

First, Red Elkins was hustled into a cell. Then Henry had to tell his story several times. Before he finished, the room was not only filled with policemen who were off duty, but also by the reporters, who in some sudden manner had rushed to the station. There was no doubt about what would be done with Henry—nothing at all. In some unknown manner he had become a hero. When he suggested he would like to go home, they would not let him walk. A taxi was called, and a very kindly policeman insisted upon going with him. It was when he was going to the door that he received the greatest shock of all.

"You know," called out the desk sergeant, "you will get the six thousand dollars which is offered to the man who captured Elkins."

It was a very dazed shoe merchant, who sank into the seat of the taxi and watched the friendly policeman climb in beside him. He was far too bewildered to talk, too excited even to think. Only the touch of his hand upon the watch in his pocket assured him that at least he had one thing he need not fear. When the door of his house opened he saw his wife and her mother standing in the hall. Probably they noticed only the policeman looming behind him. For his wife gave a wail:

"What have you done, Henry?"

It was the policeman who answered, not Henry.

"It's a hero I am bringing home, madam. He knocked out the wildest criminal in this whole country, tonight."

For once, after Henry had been led into his den, and had seated himself in his chair—for once—his mother-in-law said nothing. Yet he had the uneasy

feeling that no matter what he said, she would not believe him. Looking, not at her, but at his wife, he told his story. It is true it was a little different from what took place—but then Henry believed he was telling the truth. Only he did make the struggle last longer than it really did.

When he mentioned the six-thousand-dollars reward, his mother-in-law did an astonishing thing: she praised him. Then came a silence which his wife broke, by asking in an odd voice:

"Did you say he stole your watch, Henry. Then, because he took your watch, you went after him?"

Henry nodded and then waxed eloquent. "Yes, and it made me mad. To think some one would steal the watch your mother gave me. That's why I went at him. And I got the watch back."

With that he reached into his pocket, pulled out the watch and held it in his extended hand. He looked for his wife, but she had gone into another room. Then, as his eyes fell upon the watch in his hand, his jaw dropped, and his eyes almost fell from his head.

In his hand was a watch, the watch he had taken from Elkins' pocket—but not his own. It was a watch set with diamonds that glittered and flashed under the electric light. His watch was gold. With amazed eyes he looked at his wife, who was coming into the room. She bore something in her hand, and her eyes sought her mother's. Her voice was a little cold as she spoke.

"Henry Richards, just what have you been doing to-night? You said that man stole your watch, and that you had a fight with him. But you never had your watch with you. You left it on the dining-room table. I tried to get you to come back for your watch, yelled at you from the door. You never had your watch at all. Henry Richards, what have you been doing?"

As Henry Richards turned his eyes to his wife, there was a sinking feeling in his heart. He could not help seeing what she held in her extended palm. There in her hand was a watch—his watch, without the shadow of a doubt. His eyes went from the watch to his mother-in-law, and he saw her lips open. As her lips opened, Henry shut his own. It was no time to say anything now.

GAS EXPERT AS CHICKEN THIEF

A NEW application of science to crime was revealed recently in Salem County, New Jersey, when it was found that a gang of chicken thieves had been operating on a large scale and getting away with large quantities of poultry by injecting a gas through an opening in the hen house so that the chickens were rendered unconscious. Then the thieves would enter and help themselves freely, and there would be no danger of their presence being betrayed by the frightened cackling of their victims. On the farm of Boone Brothers two hundred chickens were stolen in a single night without disturbing the watchdog. Four scrawny chickens and a thin rooster, which the robbers had evidently disdained to take, were found unconscious on the floor of the hen house. The gas used to render them senseless was odorless, and a truck had been used to carry away the feathered loot.

THE HOTEL SNEAK RETURNS

By Edward H. Smith

Author of "Old Ludlow Street Jail," etc.

IN the last few months the police of the country have come to the realization that one of their ancient enemies has been reborn. The type of crook known as a hotel sneak, long considered almost extinct, has reappeared and made, in the course of the last year or so, a number of striking raids in great hotels as widely separated as New York, Palm Beach, Atlantic City, Santa Barbara, and Seattle. The culmination was reached, to be sure, in the theft of nearly seven hundred thousand dollars' worth of pearls and gems from Mrs. James P. Donahue, daughter of the late Frank Woolworth, from her apartment in the Plaza, New York.

The hotels of the country, as long as thirty-five years ago, began to organize and perfect a defense against such criminals. They put in better locks and special devices for making the rooms secure. They supervised their help in every possible way, and took great care in the matter of employing individuals. They adopted methods of preventing the switching of keys or the passing out of the wrong key to any guest. They employed special detectives and house officers. The result was that this colorful kind of criminal, who used to give the law as much trouble as does the bandit of this day, became more and more a rarity.

Recently, however, the hotel prowler is growing bold and avaricious again. More than that, owing to the great advance in the value of diamonds and other precious stones, plus the increased wealth of our magnates, his new raids are yielding him sums undreamed of in bygone times.

What the hotel sneak is and does must be familiar enough to hardly need stating. He makes a specialty of getting into the rooms of opulent hotel guests and making off with jewelry and cash. He seldom takes anything else, and, because the modern traveler or hotel dweller long ago got over the bad habit of carrying large amounts of cash,

the sneak's loot has become nearly, if not quite, limited to jewelry. But the manner in which this bold criminal proceeds with his puzzling and arresting crimes is a thing not widely understood. This fellow's trade is full of tricks which even the ordinary detective knows none too well.

The hotel criminal is, of course, a combination of the sneak thief and burglar. Wherever possible, he proceeds without breaking, to use the legal term. When he does resort to the burglar's methods, he displays himself as the smoothest and most resourceful of all the tribe. He never forces doors, uses a jimmy, or employs any of the other crude methods of the porch climber, loft burglar, or flat prowler. He is the gentleman of the crew, the silk-hatted and kid-gloved brother. What he does is accomplished by finesse and skill. He is the one professional criminal in all the world who habitually wears the garments of the respectable élite. Only the superior confidence man approaches him in the sartorial field.

The circumstances and limitations of his life prescribe all this, to be sure. The people with many jewels and much money stop only at the smartest and most expensive hotels. Since no others are worth robbing, the hotel sneak naturally follows them to these hostelries, and, to go among them unobserved and inconspicuous, he must dress and behave as they do. So we find the criminal in golf togs, in riding breeches, in correct afternoon dress, and in the full regalia of evening. Almost the first requirement of a successful hotel thief is a correct and extensive wardrobe. Till he has that he cannot work, and if he loses it he is like another burglar bereft of his nippers and jimmy.

The hotel thief works, like the prison breaker, either with or without aid and, as also in the case of the escaper, his deed is always the more remarkable and arresting if he does without accomplices. More often, however, the sneak foregoes the glory of high accomplishment in the interest of safety and ease. The almost invariable suspicion of the police officer is that a hotel job has not been "pulled off" without inside help. A bell boy, a waiter, a maid or some other servant has usually given the actual thief information and guidance. Nevertheless, there are plenty of instances in which the sneak is a lone wolf. All of the more accomplished hotel thieves try to do their work alone wherever possible. Solitary criminality has two advantages always: there is no dividing of the loot and there are no confederates to confess or make stupid blunders.

The sneak who works with help usually is the head or most important member of a well-organized gang. The first step taken by such an organization is the placing of its spies and information getters. Minor members of the gangs must be placed in first-class hotels in various servant capacities. To accomplish this, in spite of the hotel's precautions, is an art in itself. The stationery of recognized employment agencies is stolen or copied, letters of recommendation are forged, gang leaders of fine appearance are made to masquerade as businss and social leaders so that they may recommend their confederates to the hotels to be invaded.

Many other devices of the most intricate and amusing type are employed to get men and women associated with the thieves into the big hostelries in one capacity or another. In one case a suave hotel prowler registered at a hotel, making a great deal of fuss about the selection of just the proper suite and bringing with him a valet of impressive exterior. After living at the hostelry for two weeks and making himself very well known to the manager and the staff by means of constant special requirements, telegrams, extra-service de-

mands and the expenditure of a good deal of money for accommodations and tips, the distinguished visitor was suddenly called to Europe. He went to the manager at once, smiling and condescending.

"Mr. Blank," he said, "I am unfortunately called to England at once to assume the affairs, for a few weeks, of my uncle, Lord Bluffby, who is ill. For good reasons I don't want to take my man, Perkins, who's been with me for five years. Neither do I want to lose track of him. He is an excellent fellow, a skillful waiter, a good valet. Can't you find a place for him on your staff somewhere until I get back? I should be greatly in your debt and so would he."

So Perkins was installed as a waiter, in which capacity he frequently went to the rooms of guests, to serve meals and drinks, and to wait on private tables. He had advantages for observing and planning. Result? In five weeks a woman guest had been robbed of about fifteen thousand dollars in gems, and another on the same floor had lost nearly ten thousand dollars' worth.

The servants were closely examined, to be sure. And Perkins went through the mill with the rest. As a matter of truth, he was most rigorously questioned, because he had frequently served meals in the rooms of the two robbed guests. But no admissions could be got from him, and he was able to show that he was not on the floor, but actually off duty and at his rooms when the robberies were committed. He was, however, in some trouble until his former master, evidently come straight from London, had appeared and registered at his old hotel. He immediately asked for his servant, to be sure, and insisted that the man be sent to unpack his luggage and make him comfortable.

The manager of the hotel, still not satisfied as to Perkins' innocence, took it upon himself to tell the story and question the man's employer rather sharply.

The supposed lordling flew into a white glow of indignation and superciliousness. What! His old servant, Perkins, treated like a thug and questioned like a criminal? What! This old and faithful servitor struck and threatened by the beastly police? And the hotel, to whom his dear Perkins had been entrusted, permitting such an outrage! No such hotel was a fit place to live in. He would move out at once, and he would take care to see that the police did not dare to molest Perkins again.

So they went their way, and it was about two years before the police, through another crime, similarly engineered, found out that the lord was a fraud and the valet a spotter or hotel burglar's tool. A third man, who registered at the hotel and insisted on having rooms which Perkins had previously told him to get, did the actual burglary. I say the police found this out. In fact, however, they proved nothing, and these prowlers were not finally sent away till they tried their game in the Antipodes, at Melbourne or Brisbane.

This is, to be sure, one of the more elaborate workings of the prowler's plot. Ordinarily he does not put himself to so much trouble. It is easier to get hold of some bell boy, already well inclined toward thievery, to make love to some unstable maid and fill her dull head full of splendid fancies, or to find among the waiters, porters, or other employees some man who has had his brush with the law in the past and managed to conceal it from the hotel employment manager, but not from the sharp eyes of his own stripe and kind.

As I have already suggested, the hotel prowler who works his game with a lone hand, dispensing with all these colorful, helpful, and yet always expensive and dangerous assistants, is a more remarkable rogue and wears the

highest crown among his kind. The police files, beginning in the days of Inspector Byrnes in the 1880's, are full of the records of such men. They all worked their game on lines necessarily similar, yet differing enough in detail to lend variety to the work of their historians, and to baffle the police. Some years ago I encountered one of these fellows in the Middle West, who had come to grief through some miscarriage of plan, and was willing to talk for the newspapers. His was one of the most unusual and effective methods of working that ever came directly to my attention.

The ordinary lone hotel prowler of that day went to a city and straight to the hotel where he meant to make his coup. In order to mingle with the guests, spot his victim, get himself into a room adjacent to the prospective sheep, study the habits of this person, find a means of ingress and accomplish his raid, the prowler had to stay about the hotel for two, three, and more weeks. He was thus likely to become as familiar to the hotel employees and the "house dick" as his victim's affairs to him. Herein lay grave danger of arrest and conviction.

This burglar obviated all this by means of a novel plan of action. Instead of going to the big, gilded palace and inscribing himself as a guest, he put up at a modest hotel in the residential section and let it be known that he was a broker, a rôle his looks made convenient. Then, when he had arranged such matters as dress and police investigation, he strolled into the Grand Palais de la Monnaie or the Hotel Magnifique, and gave the guests the benefit of his experienced inspection. He visited the hotel in the evening, to be sure, when the women were dressed for dinner and wearing their jewelry. By affecting displeasure at various tables offered him by the head waiter, he managed to stroll the length of the dining room and observe with a keen eye the jewels being worn by the various women.

When the jewel burglar had spotted the woman with the most attractive array of baubles, he took a table from which he could observe her and ordered a quick meal, so that he might finish by the time she was ready to leave the dining room. If she sat long with her escort or guests, he dallied over desserts and cigars till he saw her getting ready to rise. Then he paid his check in haste and left the dining room. But just outside the door he halted, adjusting his gloves or lighting a fresh cigar, until she came along. Usually she had left her wrap upstairs or her escort bore it. If that was so, her arms and shoulders were open to view, and the burglar managed to get near enough to make sure that her gems were not paste. If he was foiled in this for any reason or by any accident, he returned another night, perhaps wearing a slight disguise, and made sure.

His next step was to find out the number of the bejeweled one's room or suite. This was managed by standing at the desk and watching her call for her key or getting into the elevator with her and watching her enter her door. Let us suppose that the lady entered room No. 808. The burglar walked along the hall and judged by the situation of the adjoining doors and other indications which are lost upon all but the expert, whether No. 808 was the entrance to a room or a suite. If the lady lived in a suite, the prowler noted the numbers of the adjoining rooms and those across the hall and somewhat nearer to the elevator. Then he left the hotel at once.

He now waited until about nine o'clock the next morning. Let us suppose that the lady being watched occupied a suite consisting of rooms Nos. 808, 810, and 812. Room No. 814 was the adjoining room nearer the elevator shaft, and No. 806 the adjoining room

farther from the shaft. The former was, therefore, most desirable for observing the lady's coming and going, the latter not so good. Also, the rooms Nos. 813, 811, 809, across the hall from the lady's suite, were highly desirable for the burglar's purpose, all of them better than No. 806, and none quite so good as No. 814. The burglar naturally wanted No. 814. He now took up a telephone at a public booth and called the hotel.

"Connect me with room No. 814, please," he said in his best voice.

If the guest in No. 814 answered, the burglar asked: "Is this Mr. Pillon's room?" being always careful to use some unusual name.

"Mr. who?" came the voice.

"Mr. Pillon, Mr. Aristide Pillon."

"Never heard of him."

"What is the number of your room, please."

"This is No. 814."

"Oh, I'm dreadfully sorry to have disturbed you. I want three fourteen."

And the burglar hung up.

A little bit later he tried again—this time for No. 813. If he found that room occupied as well, he cussed his luck a little, waited a bit longer, and tried No. 811. Eventually he got from the hotel switchboard operator the information:

"There must be some mistake, sir. Room No. 811 is unoccupied.

The burglar then left the booth, rushed to his outlying hotel, and was driven posthaste to the big hostelry. His grips were carried in and he approached the clerk most engagingly.

"I was here a year or two ago, and had a room on the eighth floor—room eight eleven. It suited me very well. Is it by any chance unoccupied? If so I should like to have it."

"You may have eight eleven," the clerk would say.

"Thank you, so much," would come the burglar's response.

He would say no more, for he wanted to call the least necessary attention to the incident. He was escorted to his room, stayed there quietly, was almost never seen in the lobby, and ate out much of the time—an unobtrusive and retiring man. But up on his floor he had his door open most of the time. When it was safe he was in the hall, listening at the doors of Nos. 808, 810, and 812.

In a few days he was familiar enough with the habits of the victim. Then, one fine afternoon, she went out. The manner of proceeding at this point depended a good deal on the kind of keys and locks used in the hotel. But no matter what their fashion, the burglar got into the room and prowled it. If he found the lady's jewelry ready to hand, he took it, left the hotel, and was soon out of town. If he could not reach it, he nevertheless always managed to find out where the lady kept her stuff. Having discovered this, and the kind of implements he would require to get at the jewels, he left the room, relocked it, supplied himself with his materials, and waited until there was another chance. Then the jewels disappeared, and the police wondered and tore their hair.

The hotel diamond thief, like his cousin who burglarizes apartments and houses, is the most conspicuous employer of the kind of strange underworld crook formerly called a tool or thieves' tool, but now becoming familiar as the pathfinder. This is a creature, male or female, who is not a burglar or thief and usually not a member of any one gang, who makes it his or her business to spot rich men and women. Such rascals work in hotels, restaurants, theaters, opera houses, stores, fashionable shops, and all manner of places frequented by men and women fond of lavishness, luxury, and display.

One of the most unusual hotel robbery cases on the books is that of Ma-

dame Munro, a wealthy Americo-Parisienne, which was successfully terminated by Detective William Soule of Chicago some years ago. Madame was making a tour of the United States after the death of her husband. She had with her a duenna and about a quarter of a million dollars' worth of jewels, which she brashly carried with her from city to city, in sleeping cars, steamers, cabs, coaches, street cars, hotel busses, and all the other conveyances met with in the course of five thousand miles of travel.

Eventually, Madame Munro reached San Francisco. One night she went out to see Chinatown, accompanied by her duenna and another woman then traveling with her. In spite of the evil reputation of the region she was invading, the Frenchwoman wore her whole array of jewels, rashly telling herself that they were safer on her body than anywhere else. Nature, however, came to the woman's aid. A heavy mist lay over the town and rain impended, so that the slummers all wore raincoats, one of which effectively hid Madame Munro's bracelets, necklaces, et cetera. Accordingly she got through Chinatown safely enough and went to one of the all-night restaurants for which the Golden Gate city was then more celebrated than now. Here the women were joined by two men of good standing, whom they had previously met in the ordinary social way.

But nothing happened that night. Madame Munro was taken home in safety and even warned by one of her escorts that so much jewelry should be guarded more carefully.

Twelve days later Madame Munro left her hotel to visit the Cliff House and the Seal Rocks, points of interest near San Francisco. An entire afternoon was devoted to the trip. When Madame Munro got home she bathed and made ready to dress for dinner. When she went to the dresser drawer for her jewel case, she discovered that it was gone.

The detectives suspected every one and no one. The women companions of the rich Parisienne were above suspicion, and the two men who had accompanied them at the restaurant the night the jewels were shown in public were also not to be seriously considered. The hotel help, after much questioning, seemed also to be barren of any promise. The trip through Chinatown was repeated without result, and next the restaurant was revisited, while men and women detectives sat at numerous tables, watching for the slightest slip on the part of any of the help that might give an indication.

Finally Detective Soule and many assistants began an arduous check-up of every employee of the restaurant, with the result that it was finally discovered that Waiter Samish had quit his job the day after Madame Munro's visit, but eleven days before she was robbed at her hotel. Investigation showed that Samish—which was not the man's true name, by the way—had lain idly about the town for about two weeks after his quitting of the job, and had then disappeared.

Detectives were kept circulating among the man's former intimates, letting drop the information that he was wanted at a lawyer's office to receive important good news. Soon the word came that one of these men had received a letter from the waiter, posted in New Orleans. Soule and two assistants set out for the Creole city, leaving another assistant behind them to drop a letter one or two days later, addressed to the flown waiter at general delivery, New Orleans. The trick worked. After a few days of shadowing the general-delivery window, the shadows were rewarded by seeing the waiter call for his missive. They followed him to a lodging house in the poorer quarter of the town, later

watched him go to a pawnshop, and soon found that he had pledged a small, loose diamond. The same day they learned that he had received a letter from New York, and a few hours later they followed him to a train and boarded it with him. So the scene of the hunt shifted to the Grand Street district or lower East Side of New York, where the waiter took a room in a poor lodging house and did not mark that private detectives who spoke Jewish took rooms on either side of him.

After waiting a few days the waiter received two callers, with whom he spoke and argued long and earnestly, while the detectives listened on the other side of the door. When they had heard enough to be certain that the waiter was dickering with fences, the room was rushed, the door broken down, and the trio seized and disarmed. The jewels were found, after a long search, under the floor, a board of which had been skillfully raised to permit the depositing of the little black bag.

The man confessed his crime, returned the jewels, and was not prosecuted because Madame Munro wanted no publicity. His story was remarkable enough. He had been a thief and served a term in prison. On his release he had become a waiter. On the night of Madame Munro's visit to the night restaurant in San Francisco he had marked her jewels and been tempted. At midnight he had been relieved and told to go home, but he had waited outside till the Munro party left, followed to the hotel, and, by a little quick moving, got inside the hotel ahead of Madame Munro. He watched at the desk until she called for her key, and so got the number of her room. The next day he appeared and managed to get the adjoining room for himself. Here he waited for ten days, observing every movement of his prey.

One thing troubled him. The rooms of this hotel were fitted with Yale locks and Samish could neither get possession of Madame Munro's key nor muster skill enough to open a lock of this type.

One afternoon he went out for a walk. A little later he returned to his hotel and was taken up in the elevator to his floor. As he was about to leave the car he searched himself quickly, said that he had lost his key, and asked the elevator boy to get the pass-key for him, at the same time passing the boy a large tip and asking him to bring a pack of cigarettes along and "keep the change."

While the boy was gone for the key, Samish took into his left hand a piece of modeling wax and waited. All he needed was to get his hands on that pass-key for a few minutes, and all would be over. Luck played into his hands. Just as the boy was going to open the burglar's door, the elevator bell rang urgently.

"Answer that and come back for the key," said the smiling Samish, extending another tip of a dollar.

The boy, in his delight at such liberal tips and his alarm at the clamor of the bell, forgot himself and let the pass-key go out of his hand. When he returned, two or three minutes later, he found his generous patron standing smilingly in the entrance to his room, holding out the key to him. The boy did not suspect that in that short time —in five minutes, as a matter of fact— the thief had impressed both faces of the key upon his wax.

The same afternoon a locksmith made a key from the impressions. When Madame Munro left her rooms the next day with her friends, for the Cliff House and the Seal Rocks, Samish went cautiously to her door to try his key. It worked. He entered. He found the jewels. He packed his grips and was gone within half an hour. He might never have been caught or his secret known had he been able to resist the fugitive's terrible need of writing home for news.

STUNG BY A HAIR

By Thomas Topham

Author of "Where the Butler Got Off," etc.

WHEN "Cricket" Jones, detective sergeant, read an ancient treatise on criminology that he had found in the police station, and then arrested the president of the Citizens and Merchants Bank as a gunman suspect because he had the Darwinian tubercle on his ear, he caused considerable trouble for the police, and particularly for the head of the detective bureau, Captain William Melvin.

Captain Melvin simply leaned back in his swivel chair, flapped his hands helplessly, opened his mouth, and emitted one roar after another. They were loud, reverberating roars that could be heard clearly in the halls of Central Station.

"No, I don't want to see Jones," bawled out the captain at Lieutenant Bayless, who had imparted the bad news to him. "Tell that dumb runt he's canned, fired, discharged. Snatch off his badge and kick him clear across the street. He can do what he pleases about it. If I see him I'll likely shoot him."

Detective Sergeant Cricket Jones, sitting in the outer office, heard Captain Melvin rage and knew that his doom was on its way. Lieutenant Bayless broke the actual news as gently as he could.

"It's kind of tough, old man," said the lieutenant to Cricket, "but Captain Melvin is furious. You got to admit, Cricket, that you've pulled some dumb tricks around here, and the captain's stood for 'em, mostly because you seemed to pull through somehow on big cases. But you don't stand one chance to square this thing. My advice is for you to evaporate."

"All right," agreed Cricket bitterly. "The fact is, I'm sick of the job. It's chuck full of grief. I been studyin' an' studyin', readin' books an' all, an' that's what I git for it. I mix up a

little science in this detectin' business an' bingo! I'm canned. That feller, McNamara, may be president of the United States treasury, but he's a crook or that book is all wrong."

"Sergeant Jones," called a man at the telephone desk. "Chief wants you."

Cricket started in surprise. Captain Melvin, who had, two minutes before, absolutely refused to talk to him, had sent Lieutenant Bayless out with the message he had just received.

"You tell the chief for me to go to the devil," called Cricket. "I'm on my way." And out he started.

Lieutenant Bayless grabbed Cricket by the arm.

"You're going in to see Melvin," he said grimly, "if I have to call out the reserves to carry you in."

"He won't do nothin' but bawl me out," protested Cricket, "an' I've had enough of that. He's always bawlin' me out for somethin'."

But despite his defiant attitude, Cricket turned and accompanied Lieutenant Bayless into Captain Melvin's private office. Much to his surprise the captain did not attempt to strangle him.

"Sergeant Jones," said Captain Melvin gruffly, "the big chief just called me. He wants me to come up and bring you along. Of course, it's something about this McNamara affair. Put your badge back on and I'll drop proceedings until he gets off whatever's on his chest. Unless I'm mistaken, he wants the privilege of taking that badge off you personally."

Cricket drew back in horror.

"Nix," he said

"Come on," ordered Captain Melvin peremptorily, and Cricket changed his mind. The captain looked like a man whom it would be dangerous to cross

They were admitted to the chief of police after a short delay. The chief whirled around in his chair and smiled pleasantly.

"I suppose this is Sergeant Jones with you, captain?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"What have you done in his case?"

"I propose to suspend him and allow the commission to pass on it," said Captain Melvin.

"So I supposed," said the chief of police. "Jim McNamara called up my secretary and made a strenuous complaint about his arrest. He called it an outrage and all that. But I don't want Sergeant Jones suspended unless it is clear that he committed a grave mistake. This fellow McNamara thinks he about runs this town. He's raised a row twice over being arrested for speeding. He is not a privileged character. Just why did you arrest him, sergeant?"

Cricket Jones, who had been listening listlessly, brightened.

"Well," replied Cricket, "it was like this, chief. He was hangin' around some bank winders, not his own bank, either. He had a cap pulled down over his mug, an' bein' a little wart an' kinda flashy dressed, he looked pretty suspicious. My first idear was he was a lookout. We'd jest been told they's a big mob of gunmen drifted in from Chi, an' been ordered to round 'em up——"

"Yes," interrupted the chief, "McNamara told my secretary that he was on a corner waiting for a car on his way to the golf links, and stepped over to look at the window display of a rival bank, when you came up and arrested him."

"That's right," agreed Cricket. "I eye him a little an' he looks in the door, but don't go in. Then I steps up an' I says: 'Bo, what you doin' around here?' He looks me over an' he says: 'None of your business.' So I show him my badge. Then he says: 'Well, Mr. Officer, I'm president of the Citi-

zens an' Merchants Bank, if that'll do you any good.' An' he laughs like it's a good joke, so I think he's gittin' fresh an' I drag him down for investigation. Lots of guys git fresh when they're pinched an' say they're the mayor or some other big bug. An' he certainly did look like one of these little gunmen."

"I think that's what made him so angry, you mistaking him for a gunman," said the chief, smiling. "There's no doubt but that you were a little hasty, sergeant, but I think we'll let Mr. McNamara roar. Captain Melvin, you can let Sergeant Jones off with a warning to be a trifle more careful."

Cricket sighed with relief and satisfaction.

"I wouldn't have took him down at that, chief," he said, "only he had a Darwinian tubercle on his ear, an' when I see that I put it down as a cinch he's a killer——"

"What do you know about Darwinian tubercles?" asked the chief quickly, turning a surprised look on the detective.

"Nothin' much, only the birds that wear 'em are tough eggs," said Cricket. "They kill at the drop of the hat, or else the books is all wrong. An' McNamara's sure got that ear."

"Very interesting," said the chief of police, with another keen glance at Cricket. "But sergeant, I'm afraid that your researches have been made into books that are not strictly modern. Now, even the greatest authority on criminal types admitted that certain abnormalities, for instance, his famous handle-shaped ear, might be found on persons who lived law-abiding lives. They may be ruthless persons, perhaps, but not criminal in any sense."

"It all sounds like bunk to me," put in Captain Melvin, who gave small heed to a man's ears and more to his record.

"No, it's not all bunk," declared the chief of police. "Of course, the study of types that had such a fad has been discounted recently, but I'm glad to see that Sergeant Jones is interested enough to study criminology. I hope he goes deeper into the subject, applies his knowledge, with proper care. More science is what we need, especially among our young and impressionable officers. The day is coming when science will play a large part in combatting lawlessness."

With that the chief of police dismissed his two visitors. Cricket was triumphant, Captain Melvin slightly puzzled.

Captain Melvin ordered Lieutenant Bayless to put Cricket on reserve.

"You can't cause very much trouble there," said Captain Melvin, who was still somewhat disgruntled over the outcome of the McNamara affair, and considered Cricket a positive menace to his job as chief of detectives. "As an old head I'm giving you a piece of advice, Cricket. Lay off this scientific stuff, in spite of what the big boss says. The department hires scientific birds we can call on if we want to, when we get blood and poison and things like that. If you go round pinching persons because their ears don't lay flat or because they do, you'll have the jail full and no end of rows. It's all right for the chief to talk that way, but if he hadn't been sore at McNamara, probably because McNamara opposed him for chief or something, you'd be out of a job this minute."

"Jest the same," said Cricket, a little defiantly, "they's something to this scientific business."

Cricket loafed on reserve for that day. He was called out with other officers twice, but the calls revealed no opportunities to apply scientific methods to crime detecting. Between calls he dipped into another book on criminology, this one on hair. He was surprised at the exhaustive investigations that had been made into such a simple thing as

hair. Hair, to him, had always been just hair, but it seemed that hair played a large and important part in the detection of criminals. Men had been hanged by a hair.

The next day was better. Early in the day Cricket and several other detectives were hustled to an outlying industrial section where the paymaster of a large plant had been held up in approved style, robbed, and the tires of his automobile shot off to prevent pursuit. The paymaster had put up a fight, and had shot repeatedly into the bandits' car.

The lieutenant in charge of the pursuit took his automobile load of detectives to the scene of the crime. Then he began unloading them at strategic points to scour the neighborhood for clews, while he, with two others, continued in the car. Cricket found himself assigned to the section of several large factories. His exact duties were to watch cars for the supposed number of the bandit car, question any suspicious-looking persons, and report to headquarters any clews that he might find.

Conscientiously Cricket covered the territory assigned to him. He met a patrolman to whom he told the news of the robbery.

"By golly," said the officer, "they's a deserted auto a couple blocks back. Bet that was them holdups. One wheel's smashed."

"Le's see," cried Cricket, and together they hastened away. The number was wrong, but the car answered in description as to make and build of the robber car. Two bullet holes in the body told of the paymaster's futile shooting.

"I'll hustle over an' telephone to headquarters," said Cricket. "Chances are this is the car. You keep watch here an' I'll be back."

Cricket made his report and returned, but by that time another load of officers scouring the district had arrived. They were busily examining the wrecked car. One of them found a cap on the floor in the rear. The lieutenant in charge took possession of the cap.

"Pretty good clew," said the lieutenant, looking for the name of the store that had sold the cap. "He's a regular. Cut out the mark."

The cap was passed from hand to hand. At last it came to Cricket. He looked at it casually, was about ready to return it when he jerked it back, and looked more closely. He drew in his breath.

If one of the bandits had worn that cap, then Cricket had a clew.

Inside the cap Cricket could see several perfectly good hairs! And he had been reading about hair and how to detect criminals by it!

The detective's first impulse was to call the lieutenant's attention to the hairs, but the fear of ridicule deterred him. Most likely the lieutenant would make some caustic remark about dumbness, invite him to go out and examine the hair of every passer-by. Cricket walked around the wrecked car with the cap, and unobserved succeeded in salvaging three hairs. He stuffed these in an old envelope and put them in his pocket.

Science was going to add its mite to the running down of those desperate robbers if Cricket had anything to do about it.

The lieutenant began firing orders.

"Now you men scatter and comb this district," he directed. "They probably stole another car, but at that they may be in the neighborhood. Go get 'em."

Cricket took the lieutenant to one side.

"Loot," he said confidentially, "let me skip back to headquarters. I got an idear maybe I might git busy on another angle. That cap, I think mebbe I know the store it come from."

"Go ahead," said the lieutenant. "Take the cap along, but report in to Lieutenant Bayless and tell him what you're doing."

"Thanks," said Cricket, and struck out for a street car.

Instead of going to a store where they sold caps, Cricket headed for the bureau of research offices, where the chemist, bacteriologist, and other scientific gentlemen held forth. To one of the men who asked him what he wanted he confided that he was a city detective on an important case, and wanted to talk to a man who knew something about hair.

"Bill," called the man, and a youth working at a table with a microscope stepped forth.

"Now look here," said Cricket, "do you know anything worth mentioning about hair?"

"A little," replied the microscopist modestly.

"Could you describe the guy if you have his hair? Could you, say, tell what nation he come from?" asked Cricket eagerly. "I read about a feller oncet who could."

"Hardly the nation," said the microscopist dubiously. "Perhaps the race, maybe the age of the person, and the sex."

Cricket produced his envelope of hair. He carefully laid out the three hairs.

"Leave 'em here," said the microscopist. "It'll take an hour or so. I'll have to make comparisons under the microscope."

Cricket spent an anxious hour, and was back on the dot.

"Where did you get those hairs?" asked the microscopist, producing a card with the three hairs neatly mounted.

"Out of a bandit's cap," said Cricket.

"Well, he was a funny bandit," said the microscopist. "They're woman hairs. Now, I'll give you a lot more information about them. The hair shows that——"

"I don't want no more information," said Cricket, bitterly disappointed, and stuffing the card in his pocket he stamped out of the office. He had expected an exact description of the bandit who had worn the cap. To his mind the microscopist had betrayed him, and was making a wild guess.

Cricket marched to the detective bureau, cursing. The finest clew he had ever obtained had gone to smash. And there at the bureau he found excitement high. While he had been busy following down a thin, false clew, a party of officers who had remained to search for the bandits had captured three likely looking suspects. But the three stoutly maintained their innocence, even offered alibis that sounded very good.

Chief of Detectives William Melvin was convinced that the three men were guilty. He was obsessed with the idea that they could be made to talk, but he failed to "break" them. Even Detective Sergeant Oscar Swanson, talented in forcing confessions, failed in his efforts to wring the faintest admissions of guilt from any of the men. Singly, in pairs, together, they were questioned, cross-questioned, threatened, bullied, even mistreated. The chief of police, aroused by the boldness of the crime, took a hand and failed. The men maintained a stubborn silence, or, if they talked, made denials.

Cricket felt that his nose had been put badly out of joint. He had left the searching squads too soon to get in the glory of the capture, and now he was unnoticed. It struck him that he might throw a little bombshell with some information of his own, even if he didn't believe it himself. So he edged over to Lieutenant Bayless.

"If they ain't a woman in the gang, them men ain't the bandits," Cricket confided to the lieutenant.

"How do you know that?" shot back Bayless.

"Well, I know," declared Cricket. "I been workin'."

"You just deduced it," derided Lieutenant Bayless. "I hear you've been studying this here scientific detecting. Just maybe their ears will give you a clew."

Captain Melvin stamped into the office from a fruitless session with the supposed outlaw gang.

"They're hard-boiled to a finish," declared the captain. "I never saw such a gang. New ones, too. That Chi crowd must be the limit, but you can bet your last dollar they're not going to get away with anything like that here. Bayless, have the men as they come in walk through and look at these crooks. We'll keep them on exhibition in room A. If any detective can recognize even one of these birds we'll at least get a start on them."

"I'll go in now," offered Cricket, the idea popping into his head that one of the bandit's hair might match his find. If such should accidentally be the case he could acquire great merit as a detective, as well as show up a microscopist.

"All right, take him in, lieutenant," ordered the captain.

Cricket walked into the room where the three suspected bandits were sitting in chairs under guard. They did not present a particularly beautiful picture, but Cricket noted nothing about their general appearance. He was looking at their hair.

One had red hair—he was out of it; the second's hair was brown—a possibility; the third was almost entirely bald.

It looked hopeless to Cricket; still, faint hopes sometimes panned out well. The detective walked back of the brown-haired man and reaching over he neatly caught several hairs between his finger and thumb and jerked.

"Ouch!" exclaimed the suspect, and jumped. "By gosh, that's a new one, pullin' hair."

"Here Cricket, what you doing?" yelled Lieutenant Bayless, as Cricket moved to the next man and prepared to repeat his operation.

"Gittin' me some hair samples," said Cricket, and jerked out five hairs from the red-headed prisoner, who let out a loud squawk of protest.

"I won't stand for it," whimpered the bald-headed captive. "I been worked over enough. But you kin pull out all I got left an' you ain't goin' to git me to confess nothin' I didn't do."

"Stop it," ordered Bayless.

"My gosh, I ain't doin' no harm," protested Cricket. "Certainly there ain't no harm gittin' a couple samples of hair."

"What you want 'em for?" demanded Lieutenant Bayless suspiciously.

"I jest want 'em," said Cricket.

"Well, you wait here," ordered Bayless and popped out. He came back with Captain Melvin.

"No, you can't pull out their hair," snapped Captain Melvin, when the situation had been explained to him. "When I want you to do any work of that kind I'll see that you get orders. Look 'em over and if you know 'em say so."

Cricket, on the point of explaining to Captain Melvin his object of comparing the hair with those found in the cap, froze. He knew he would get only ridicule and reference to his study of ears. Anyhow, he had samples of two, and the bald-headed one didn't count.

"I never seen 'em before," said Cricket and stalked out.

Captain Melvin followed Cricket, watching him curiously. Cricket went to a corner of the room and carefully compared the hairs he had obtained with those he had found in the cap. Neither matched, it was apparent to the naked eye. He had scarcely returned his precious clews to his pocket when

Captain Melvin placed his hand on Cricket's shoulder.

Although Cricket did not know it, the captain was consumed by curiosity, and also a little afraid that he had not acted wisely in interrupting Cricket's hair pulling.

"Cricket," said Captain Melvin, "Bayless told me that you said there was a woman in on this job. Is that so?"

The question staggered Cricket. He had not, when he talked to Lieutenant Bayless, placed any credence in his own story. It had been the quick outburst of an innate talkativeness. It was now up to him to fish or cut bait. Detective Sergeant Jones decided to fish. If he boldly stuck to what he had told Lieutenant Bayless, that one of the bandits was a woman, he could, if he were wrong and pushed into a corner, throw the blame on the microscopist. And if the microscopist should be correct in his deductions, Cricket would get vast credit.

"Well, what are you dreaming about?" snapped up Captain Melvin. "Did you or didn't you say there was a woman in this job?"

"Absolutely," said Cricket.

"Why? What makes you think so?"

Rapidly Cricket outlined to Captain Melvin his investigations. The captain whistled.

"You ought to have told me about this sooner, Cricket," the chief reprimanded the detective. "We'd have had out a general alarm to watch for a gang with a woman in it. You shouldn't have kept this to yourself."

"They all had a look at that cap before I got it," said Cricket. "The bunch didn't find them hairs, an' I didn't see no reason to tell 'em about 'em. I thought they'd jest laugh an' git off some gag about McNamara."

"Well, you've done some good work," admitted the captain. "Whenever you get dope like that, come to me. I won't laugh. So you're sure those are woman's hairs? Come on, you and I are going to get one of those rats off by himself and tell him the woman has been arrested. We'll see what reaction we get. Which one shall we try "

"Red-headed one," suggested Cricket.

"Why?"

"Oh, if they's a girl in it, he's the youngest an' she'd likely be his friend," said the detective.

Captain Melvin ordered the red-headed youth into a room by himself, then he and Cricket entered.

"Well, Red," began Captain Melvin genially, "I guess the game's up."

"Ain't no game," replied Red stolidly.

"Well, the girl says there is," said the captain quickly.

"What girl?" The red-headed man shot a quick look at the officer.

"Why, the jane that was in your gang. We got her and she's already said enough to stick her. She'll break completely before we're through."

The red-headed youth paled perceptibly.

"Look here, captain," he said hoarsely, "there wasn't no girl with us. That's the truth."

"With you where?" shot the captain quickly. "On that holdup raid?'

"Yes," said Red, and then, realizing that he had been trapped, the youth cursed fiercely.

"Look here, you," the prisoner cried, "you can't mix up the girl in this. She wasn't there, no matter what she says."

From that moment the red-headed youth's cause was lost. It took a little time, but when Captain Melvin and Cricket left the bandit they had all the information they wanted. They knew the name of the rooming house where the band had quarters, the name of Red's feminine companion, the details of the paymaster robbery.

Quickly Captain Melvin sent men out to bring in the girl and search the rooms of the outlaws.

"Cricket's dope was good," Captain

Melvin told Lieutenant Bayless and a group of detectives. "After a bunch of our bright sleuths had overlooked the best clew going, Cricket hooked onto it, figured out there was a woman in this thing, and that one fact forced a confession. Tell 'em, Cricket, how you did it."

"Science," said Cricket modestly. "When the others was through with that cap, I examined it and found some hair. I have 'em microscoped. It's a woman's hair, so the feller with the microscope said. She must have worn that cap an' she must have been along an' ducked later."

"That red-headed bird admits she was in the gang, but he sticks to it she wasn't along on the holdup," said Captain Melvin. "You can see he's dippy over her, and is trying to protect her. We'll ring her in, all right, over this hair."

Reporters flocked in and got the story of how science had solved a hard problem for the police. Captain Melvin was unstinted in his praise of Detective Sergeant Cricket Jones, took pains to point out the steps that Cricket had taken. The reporters left.

"Say," said a man who pushed up beside Captain Melvin, "is there a dick here named Jones?"

"Yes." Captain Melvin pointed out Cricket.

"Oh, yes, that's him," said the new arrival. He turned to Cricket. "I'm the microscope man and I want you to drop over when you get time. I want to tell you more about that hair you brought in. You rushed off before I had time to tell you it was out of a wig——"

"What?" burst out Captain Melvin.

"Yeah," said the microscopist. "I told him it was woman's hair, and I was going to tell him it was dyed, and being the tips and pretty short, was probably out of a wig worn by a man——"

"But woman's hair?" asked Captain Melvin. "I always thought they made wigs out of chink hair."

"Aw, no," said the microscopist. "They make men's wigs out of women's hair, mostly, and they always dye it. These hairs he shows me didn't have any follicle on any of 'em, showing they didn't drop out of a live head. I was going to tell him all that, but he beat it, and I was too busy to come over right away."

"Holy smoke," said Captain Melvin. "We sure forced that red-headed man to confess under false pretenses. That bald-headed bandit had on a wig when they brought him in, but we jerked it off because we thought he was wearing it as a disguise to keep from being identified. And that's where the hair came from that Cricket took over to the microscopist. Cricket, if there hadn't been a woman actually mixed up in this, you might have had us chasing around in circles on a bum steer."

Cricket began to swell indignantly.

"Well, there was a woman in it," he said with dignity, "an' anyhow, I got results. It's a cinch now. That hair outa the cap must match the wig Baldy had on, an' he could be stuck on that alone. Science pays, jest the same."

"It certainly does, when you can grab clews right out of the air and get 'em right," admitted Captain Melvin, and laughed.

Late that afternoon Captain Melvin called Detective Sergeant Cricket Jones into his private office.

"Look at this, Cricket," invited the captain. "The newspaper boys got this story before I knew what a boner you pulled on that hair clew."

The captain handed over a newspaper. Cricket took the paper with hands that trembled, then his eye lighted pridefully as he read the bold lines:

SCIENTIFIC DETECTIVE FORCES
CONFESSION OF BANDIT BAND.

HARD-LUCK HORN

By Laurence Sterne

Author of "Where Did I Meet That Fellow," etc.

THE sharp crack of a pistol cut the silence of midnight and was followed by the tinkling crash of plate glass shattering upon the sidewalk. Detectives Horn and Ledbetter, walking through dimly lighted Bainbridge Street, near the outskirts of town, halted in momentary surprise.

"Around the corner in Elm Street," said Ledbetter, breaking into a run. "Come on!"

Horn, a pudgy man of middle age, was panting heavily after the first fifty yards, and his feet dragged reluctantly. His partner already was five yards ahead. They turned the corner and, with the faint aid of an arc light, saw a hulking shadow of a man back across the sidewalk, half a block ahead. His right arm was extended in a sinister gesture.

"Got a gun!" exclaimed Horn warningly.

"Robbin' old man Gill's store," remarked Ledbetter over his shoulder. He snatched his revolver from its holster, took quick aim and fired.

The fugitive, who had started running, whirled at the crack of the lean detective's pistol and paused deliberately. Horn, springing toward the protective trunk of a large oak, flinched instinctively. He saw a tiny spitting flash in the darkness ahead and heard a bullet whine its unseen course above Ledbetter's head.

"Look out, Andy!" he called in a curiously faint voice.

But Ledbetter was advancing at a dogtrot and his revolver barked again. "Come on!" he shouted impatiently.

Horn crouched as an answering shot clipped a leaf from a low-hanging bough near him, then dodged, Indian fashion, to the next tree. He drew his revolver and fired three shots hastily. The robber scampered to cover behind a telephone pole.

"Got 'im scared now," said Ledbetter with a grunt.

Crack!

The rangy detective stared in chagrin at his left arm, which had twitched spasmodically and then suddenly gone limp. A surprised oath came from him.

"The son of a gun winged me," he explained.

"Get behind a tree, you big fool!" yelled Horn. As the fight settled into a sniping duel, he recovered control of his nerves. That meant—as any one who knew the pair will testify—that he also recovered control of Ledbetter, for it was Rance Horn's habit to do the talking and the bossing. The inarticulate Ledbetter, although his senior, accepted his domination cheerfully.

"You got more nerve than sense," Horn chattered. "Now listen: Stay where you are and keep this bozo where he is by takin' a pot shot at him every few seconds. I'll sneak 'round through the alley into Grove Street and come up from behind 'im. When you hear me shoot, rush 'im; but hug this side o' the street and mind you don't hit me!"

The speaker slipped away in the darkness, cut across the yard of a ramshackle house and hurried through a littered alley to Grove Street. He heard three or four more shots, and his heart pounded in excitement.

At the corner of Grove and Elm, Horn dodged behind a tree and peered cautiously toward the trapped quarry. He could just make out the dim outline of the figure crouched behind the telephone pole, near the middle of the block. Resting the muzzle of his long pistol on his left wrist and sighting carefully, he fired at the human target. The bullet missed its mark, and the intended victim sprang into the street and ran in the opposite direction, toward Ledbetter.

Horn held his breath, for at the first shot he had seen a tall figure leap out from behind a tree, almost at the opposite end of the block. It was Ledbetter. True to his word, he made the final rush boldly and bravely.

And then, as suddenly as it had started, the duel ended—ended with a well-directed pistol shot. Ledbetter staggered crazily, threw up his arms and collapsed in a heap. His assailant leaped over the still figure and sprinted away.

Whereupon Detective Rance Horn showed the yellow streak.

With shaking hand he emptied his revolver, firing blindly. Then, still hiding behind his tree, he reloaded; and when he came out to give chase his shuffling run was no faster than a walk, and the fugitive had disappeared.

The entire drama had taken scarcely more than five minutes. Another five brought additional policemen, who scoured the neighborhood, searching vainly. As if by magic, a crowd of curious men and women assembled around the fallen detective. A doctor appeared from somewhere and knelt, fumbled briefly, then arose with a shake of his head and a pitying shrug. Horn shoved through the crowd importantly and stared at the body.

"Poor Andy!" he burst out. "I'd like to get my hands on the skunk that shot you. I almost had him, but I stumbled."

With other policemen he entered the shabby little grocery store of Julius Gill, where another tragedy had been enacted. The thin, old grocer, whose living quarters adjoined his store, had surprised the thief, and had been murdered for his pains. While the physician went through the futile business of applying a stethoscope to his heart, Detective Rance Horn began to talk, and the more he talked the more certain it appeared that he was the hero of the occasion.

In the next two days he told the story so often that he began to believe most of the version he gave. Then he was ordered to report at the office of Chief of Police Howe. A vague uneasiness crept over him.

Horn had gone to school with Bill Howe, had known him for thirty-five years. Parkersburg is a small city, and, therefore, not a city of strangers. Between the two men a peculiar relationship had existed for years, an unspoken understanding which bred distrust on Howe's part and a bitter hate in the heart of the braggart Horn.

It is a thing difficult to put into words. Howe apparently saw through the other man—saw him as an unreliable boaster and suspected him as a cowardly liar; Horn saw this conception in his superior's clear gray eyes, recognized the silent truth of it and, accordingly, hated Howe all the more.

"Tel me all about this shooting," the chief directed.

Horn started at the beginning, telling how he and Ledbetter had heard a shot while on their way to raid a speak-easy, and winding up with a graphic description of chasing the murderer and exchanging shots with him at close range.

The stalwart chief listened in silence, but his eyes bored into Horn's burningly. It wasn't the first time those eyes had stopped Horn in the middle of a confident sentence and sent a flush to his face. He fidgeted now. Howe's eyes brushed away his words and made him feel ridiculous.

"You say you and Andy rushed at the same time, from opposite directions," the chief drawled out, "and when Andy dropped you kept on, firing as you ran. Is that right?"

"That's about the way it was," said Horn.

Howe took a letter from his desk.

"Here's an anonymous note I just received," he went on. "Ordinarily I don't pay any attention to people that don't sign their names, but I think this will interest you. It appears to be from a woman, judging by the hand. She says she was awakened by the first shot and that from an upstairs window she saw most of the gun fight. She writes:

"I saw the short officer hide behind a tree, and stay there until his precious skin was in no danger. No wonder the police department fails to protect us. It seems to be made up of cowards."

"Have you anything to say to that, Rance?"

"She's crazy!" Horn exclaimed indignantly. "I fired first from behind a tree. Why not? But when this guy started runnin' I went right after him. I was gainin' a bit when I stumbled over a brick or somethin' and fell on my mug. That was just a piece of hard luck."

Howe's level eyes impaled him; his own eyes wavered and turned to the floor.

"You don't think I was scared, do you?" he blustered out.

"You called it 'hard luck,'" the chief said. "Let it go at that, Rance. The trouble is that you have too much 'hard luck.' That's too bad, but you might as well know now that this town is not going to keep on paying you a detective's salary and getting nothing in return except the privilege of sharing in your 'hard luck.'

"I remember, when Jeff Farrall was your partner, that the two of you got into a gun fight over in West End one night. It was Jeff that we laid away, while you got out of it without a scratch and the killer got away clean. You said you 'chased' him down Monroe Street, although witnesses said he headed down Ridge. You just had the 'bad luck' to run in the wrong direction.

"Now wait a minute!" he commanded, as Horn tried to interrupt. "I could give some more samples of your 'hard luck,' but what's the use? I think you'll be luckier in a uniform. So put one on. You are hereby demoted from detective to patrolman. I advise you to get lucky! Next time I have to call you down for anything whatever, you can turn in your shield and look for a job."

Horn gulped in dismay and stammered a protest.

"Shut up!" Howe ordered curtly. "Don't waste time trying to kid me. I know you for just what you are, Rance, and I've kept you on the force solely because I hate to throw any man out of work. I'm not fooled by your 'hard luck.' Get out, and watch your step!"

Horn's face purpled with rage. "My inning will come one of these days!" he mumbled under his breath as he slunk from the room.

Patrolman Horn strolled slowly along Beacon Road, by the reservoir, swinging his nightstick nervously. Now and then the heavy baton swished through the air savagely and slashed down an inoffensive weed. Horn was giving free rein to his temper which was as black as the night.

From the courthouse tower, a mile away, came the musical stroke of a bell. Horn stopped and listened attentively, keeping count aloud.

"Eleven o'clock," he said. "Seven hours more to go on this blasted job!"

He sighed and resumed his slow walk. After a few minutes he halted again, looked searchingly into the darkness around him and drew a cigar from his pocket. He bit the end off viciously and struck a match, carefully shielding the flame with his cupped hand. Horn was an inveterate smoker and found it hard to obey the rule which denies this indulgence to uniformed policemen while on duty.

He had taken scarcely half a dozen puffs when he heard an automobile approaching from the direction of town. Recognizing it as Chief Howe's car, he hastily ground the cigar under his heel and brought his arm up in salute.

"Evenin', Rance," called Howe, and passed on.

Horn swore bitterly, and from a distance at which he was entirely unseen shook his fist at the back of the fast disappearing car. "My time'll come, Bill Howe!" he exclaimed vindictively.

In every army some one has to act as "kitchen police." In every police department there are one or more "goat posts." The demoted Horn had been assigned to the worst beat in Parkersburg.

Beacon Hill is a lonely district in which the little city loses most of its urban characteristics, gradually giving up the pretense of being city at all and merging frankly with tilled fields and woodland. Within this fringe, whose inner border is marked by the last station of the Jefferson Avenue trolley line, the houses become fewer and the vegetable gardens more frequent as one walks away from the city.

It had always been something of a mystery why a policeman should be made to spend the night walking up and down three quarters of a mile of this lonely road. Nothing ever happened there. Perhaps something *had* happened once in the long ago, requiring the services of a policeman and establishing the tradition that the presence of a bluecoat was a necessity ever afterward.

Perhaps the post had been established because some one thought the reservoir needed guarding. This was an artificial lake, spring-fed, whose grassy banks sloped sharply upward so that the surface of the water was at a level ten feet above the road. Since only a bare hundred yards of the three-quarter-mile beat skirted this pond, however, it would have been easy enough to tamper with the town's water supply, had any one so desired.

Whatever the reason, a policeman had to walk that road every night and Horn now had the task, which virtually made of him a night watchman, for, unlike other posts, this one was not relieved. Nobody had it during the day. Horn came on at eight in the evening and remained until six in the morning. As the road led to the city and from it, so this beat was the entrance to the po-

lice department for new men and exit for those not in favor.

Horn was decidedly in the latter class and had been made to realize it fully. It had taken only a matter of hours for the circumstances of his demotion to spread through the little force, and already the nickname "Hard-luck" Horn had been fastened to him in derision. It amused his acquaintances all the more to know that there was a satirical implication behind the title, that it was not to be taken at its face meaning.

They did not hesitate to gibe him about it, and even after the novelty wore off and they left him alone, his wounded ego was slow to heal. If you wish to make a man your lasting enemy, contrive to make him ridiculous in the eyes of his fellows. It is easy to understand how Horn's bitterness nurtured and grew. He could have laughed in glee had the cruelest imaginable fate brought destruction to Chief Howe.

"I'll get even with you"—the "you" always meant Howe—"if it's the last thing I do," he vowed. "The day'll come when you'll be sorry you gave me the worst job you could think of!"

Aside from its utter loneliness, there was another great objection to his post. Chief Howe happened to live in a rambling old house out a quarter of a mile beyond the reservoir, and no cop could time the chief's goings and comings. Once in a while he parked his car and quietly made an inspection on foot; he had been known once or twice to leave the car in town overnight for repairs, coming out by trolley and walking the rest of the distance home.

"You'd just love to catch me snatching a smoke," Horn growled as he plodded along to the call box at the far end of the beat and made a midnight report to the desk sergeant at headquarters. Two hours later he would have to ring in from the opposite end of the dreary post.

All evening glowering black clouds had been threatening rain. It began to come down now in a steady drizzle. Horn sought shelter under a somewhat inadequate elm tree, pulled his coat tight and reflected upon his misfortunes. It was late September, and in the chill, damp air was a reminder that summer had gone, a warning that winter would be along presently.

"This'll be a great job three or four months from now!" Horn prophesied gloomily.

As the days passed he fretted himself into an even greater rage, for hate thrives in solitude. More and more frequently his curses culminated in threats. One night, after a servile salute, he drew his revolver impulsively and aimed at the rear of his chief's car as it sped into the darkness. However, his finger was not upon the trigger, and the gesture ended in a blasphemous oath rather than a pistol shot.

"I bet I could do it, though, and get away with it, too," Horn bragged.

The thought gave him a curious elation and yet left him shaken. Thereafter the act was repeated several times. It was well that Chief Howe had no means of knowing the murderous schemes, half serious, half absurd, that raced through the man's twisted mind. Indeed, Horn was like an actor playing at murder, assuring himself fiercely that he was likely to step out of the rôle at any time and make it real.

In this fashion through the long nights his bitterness wove a pattern of premeditated murder, his imagination devising a definite plan to which the more sober portions of his brain were as yet by no means committed. No matter how real his hatred, for the present he remained player and braggart. The motive was at hand, the means mapped out, but the final, actuating spark was missing, smothered, perhaps, by fear.

The plan had that simplicity which is the truest mark of criminal cunning. Should Howe meet violent death on this road, Horn knew, it would be impossible to avoid the finger of suspicion. Why try? From experience at many a trial, he understood fully that the essential thing was to make proof of guilt impossible.

"I could do that," he mused. "Suppose this feller is found with a bullet through his head somewhere on this road, but nobody saw the shootin'. What happens? Right away, knowin' I hate 'im worse than a rattlesnake, they'll take a look at my gun. All right. But suppose the gat has a little dust in the barrel and hasn't been shot off in months! That would fix 'em!"

To bring about this seemingly impossible circumstance would be simple. At the bottom of his trunk in his furnished room lay an old police revolver which Horn had not carried in ten years.

"Nobody knows about that," he thought, "and what if they checked up on it, for any reason whatever? If they ask where the old gat is, I say, 'Why, that wasn't any good. I threw it away long ago.' They couldn't prove any different."

This line of reasoning naturally involved the necessity of finding a way to dispose of the old weapon so that no one could find it. He was so sure a solution of that problem had been worked out that he laughed at thought of it. Walking briskly out on the road, for the night was chilly, he stopped at the reservoir, picked up a pebble, tossed it over the bank and chuckled when he heard the splash.

"There we are!" he gloated. "Nobody would think o' the gat being in there."

One evening he fished the weapon out of the trunk and stuck it under his belt before going on post. It pleased him to feel it there; it was the last prop necessary to make his rôle complete and lifelike. He swaggered through the night and thereafter kept the hidden weapon with him.

Once, as Chief Howe's car approached, he hid in a thick clump of wild plum trees, drew the pistol and took careful aim—but his hand trembled and his finger did not press the trigger.

"Look out next time!" he warned.

Next time seemed always to remain in the future, although Horn's reason for hating his superior steadily grew stronger as autumn faded into winter. The nights were uncomfortably cold, so much so that even affectionate couples now abandoned the road. Never busy, it now was practically deserted after the earlier hours of evening.

For this reason it would have been hard to select a more likely spot for crime, and yet upon each succeeding occasion Horn felt himself restrained by fear. Something was required to snap this tether. Chance supplied it—in the form of another fear.

One night in early December, Chief Howe left his car in town for a tedious repair job and came out by trolley. Stepping off the car at the end of the line, he turned his overcoat collar up against the biting wind and thrust his hands into his pockets.

He strode down the dark road and the solitude was made complete as the trolley droned its way back toward the city. He had been the only passenger riding to the end.

When he had come to a point within two hundred yards of the reservoir Howe halted abruptly. His eyes were caught by a momentary flare of light in a shallow gully a short distance off the road. Treading softly, he started over to investigate.

Patrolman Horn had wrapped a blanket around his shoulders and taken refuge in the gully to escape the wind. He was giving himself further solace with a cigarette.

"Well, Rance," Howe said, "how's the weather down there?"

Horn gaped stupidly and could find nothing to say.

"I gave you fair warning to watch your step," the chief resumed. "This settles your hash. You're not watching your post and you're smoking. Turn in your shield when you go off duty in the morning. Take the air!"

He turned and strode homeward. Horn scrambled out of the gully, stood irresolutely for a moment, then walked into the road. Anger and a great fear surged through him. His livelihood would be gone after this night. But would it? Raging impulse gripped him. He glanced around hastily. There was no one in sight. He scurried down the black road, his teeth clenched.

"Just a minute, chief. I got something to tell you," he called treacherously.

Howe turned and waited, then stiffened in amazement as he caught sight of the pistol in Horn's hand. He had no time for defense. From a distance of less than a dozen feet Horn fired. A splash of crimson appeared instantaneously upon the victim's forehead. He crumpled slowly and quietly, as if overwhelming surprise were his only emotion. Horn miraculously found himself standing over the body. The thoughts of a lifetime seemed to scamper through his mind.

"Now you've done it!" one portion of his brain wailed. "Snap into it!" another urged. "Road is dry. No tracks. Nobody saw it."

Horn glanced at his wrist watch. He had been waiting in the gully until time to ring in. Now there was no time to be lost. He dashed back toward the trolley station. Striving to compose his voice he reported in routine manner.

"Horn, Box 17, Beacon Road. All clear, sergeant. Hello! Say, I just heard a shot down the road. I'll call you back!"

Some one else had heard the shot, also. The door of a shanty near the end of the Jefferson Avenue pavement was flung open and in the shaft of light from it Horn saw a little old man. He appeared to be a laborer, from his clothing. He followed the policeman down the road.

Horn was stooping over the body when the civilian approached.

"Great guns!" he gasped out in mock amazement. "It's Chief Howe! Say, you, run back as fast as you can and telephone for an ambulance, then call headquarters. Make it real snappy now!"

The little man trotted away obediently. Horn watched him for a moment, his mind functioning with the speed of desperation, then dashed toward the reservoir. He still had the telltale weapon to get rid of and did not dare tarry.

Making sure there was no one to see him, he hurled the pistol up over the steep bank. With a sigh of relief he whirled and hurried back to the body.

He was waiting there when the ambulance clanged up, followed closely by the first car of police. Howe was dead. There was only one line for the investigation to take.

Patrolman Horn told his story, and there was no one to dispute it. He repeated it as other police arrived, and took part with them in the night's work. Captain Withers, ranking officer by virtue of Horn's deed, questioned him closely, but with unexpected politeness.

"He smells a rat," Horn thought, "but doesn't dare say so. Go ahead, old boy. Let's see you prove anything!"

His nerves were well frayed when Withers excused him late the next morning, but as he lay down in his room he reviewed the crime again and again and was satisfied with himself. Could the little laborer have seen anything? He thought not. Would his timing of the shot differ from Horn's

story? That didn't matter. Witnesses were notoriously unreliable about time.

"They can't prove a thing," Horn mumbled wearily. He repeated it drowsily and fell asleep.

The battered alarm clock on his shabby bureau marked five in the afternoon when a series of imperative knocks upon the door awakened him.

"Come in," Horn called, sitting up and rubbing his eyes sleepily. Captain Withers and three plain-clothes men entered. Their faces were hard. Horn's heart skipped a beat and he felt himself tremble. Withers wasted no words.

"You're under arrest for murder!" he exclaimed.

Panic gripped Horn. What could have gone wrong? He tried to brazen it out. "Aw, quit kiddin'!" he quavered. "What's the idea?"

"You might as well cut out the arguments and come clean," Withers said. "We've got you, Horn. We've got you cold!"

He extended his hand significantly, exhibiting a heavy pistol. It was the weapon with which Chief Howe had been slain! The color vanished suddenly from Horn's face and his head swam dizzily. He heard his accuser's words faintly, as if from a great distance.

"This gun was issued to you fifteen years ago. Records show that. The bullet that killed Bill Howe was fired from it. Nick grooved in the side of the bullet from defect in gun barrel. We've got you, Horn. Come through!"

Horn brushed his eyes frantically. The fog cleared for a moment. "Where did you get that gun?" he demanded.

Captain Withers laughed harshly.

"You threw it in the reservoir," he answered.

Horn blinked uncomprehendingly and panic fogged his brain again. The captain's voice droned on:

"You poor fool! The reservoir froze with yesterday's cold snap. It was frozen over when you threw the revolver into it. Two inches of solid ice now——"

But Horn heard no more. He had fainted.

SLAYER OF POLICEMAN GOES TO CHAIR

AMONG the recent executions at Sing Sing, was that of John Durkin, who killed Patrolman Timothy Connell during a holdup in the Bronx Borough of New York City. Mark Antonio, who was convicted with Durkin, is serving a twenty-year sentence in the prison. Three young men, including Durkin, were holding up a clerk in a grocery store, when Policeman Connell entered. As he drew his revolver, two of the robbers fired. The prosecution maintained that one of the slayers was Durkin. The third robber escaped.

WOMAN SLAYER BREAKS JAIL

CLIMBING up a plank and dropping over an eight-foot wall, Mrs. Clara Carl, of New Philadelphia, Indiana, recently effected her escape from the Indiana Women's Prison at Indianapolis. She was serving a life sentence for the deaths of her husband and her father-in-law. She was convicted on June 3, 1922, on evidence that the two men had been poisoned.

D 9 D

MAN FRIDAY

By Frederick Ames Coates

Author of "Three Rings," etc.

AS Robert Reed walked his "beat," he did not realize that the evening was one of the coldest which the early fall had produced. A ragged fringe of gray hair chafed against the upturned collar of his thin overcoat, and his hands were plunged in his pockets. His clothing was neither new nor fine enough to attract attention; nor were they shabby enough to make any passer-by think of him as a beggar, or feel pity—two entirely different attitudes of mind, equally to be shunned. Chiefly, Reed's concern was not to appear furtive, nor in any other manner suspicious. To have stood boldly still in front of the plate-glass window of the restaurant, and to have gazed within, would have been to court attention. The brief course, back and forth, on which he paced, brought him at frequent intervals opposite that window. Without slackening his slow steps, he could take a sidelong glance toward a certain table at the front of the room.

Suddenly his senses became wary. He had reached the terminus of his walk, had turned and started back, when he seemed to feel a presence behind him. It was no mere "hunch." Reed's trained sense of hearing told him that some one behind was walking in a pace too perfectly synchronized with his own to be accidental. Some one was following him.

This time, he did not pause at the restaurant window or give so much as a single swift glance toward it. The next building was a store, whose dimly lighted plate-glass front gave, at the proper angle, a tolerable mirroring surface. Reed's eyes sought this. It showed him dimly the figure of a man, some eight or ten feet to the rear; it was a man who did *not* wear the blue uniform which is universally characteristic of the guardians of the law.

The pursued man paused at the next store, and stepped into its recessed entrance. He faced about quickly. The man who followed stopped short; then

he stepped forward and extended his hand.

"Bob Reed!" he whispered. "I thought it was you, back there a ways; but I wanted to make sure. And I thought, too, maybe you was on business and didn't want to be disturbed."

"'Silk' Slattery!" muttered Reed, his hand giving the other man's a half-hearted grip. "What on earth brought you to this city?"

He did not hear the answer. His own thought preoccupied him. It was only natural, he realized disappointedly, that even here in the East he should meet some one who knew him. The society of crooks, though it has no organization, no formal roster, no local lodges, is as effective a brotherhood as any fraternal order. Its members, too, have keener eyes and memories for the faces of their fellows. Moreover, they are more prone to travel than honest men. It was not so bad, of course, as if some detective had recognized him.

"Let's walk along," said Slattery, drawing the other's arm through his own. "Somebody might spot us, standing in here. I got a nice job all laid out, and I'm going to need some help. Maybe you can join up with me—that is, unless you're working something here on your own."

Reed hesitated and drew the other around a corner into a side street where the passers-by were fewer. He hoped, a little later, to become a familiar dweller here, and he did not wish any one to form a mental association between him and a man who, by his own telling, was likely to be wanted by the police.

"I—no. Don't count on me, Silk."

Silk Slattery regarded him sharply. "You ain't got the reform bug, have you?" he demanded.

"No, no." Reed hastened to reassure him. He had no desire to antagonize Slattery, from whom he asked only to be let alone.

"Let's hear about it," urged Slattery. "Maybe it's a better lay than mine. Maybe you could use me in it, instead of the other way."

"No. It's not anything that would interest you," said Reed. It was a tremendous nuisance, meeting the fellow like this! "I—I'll see you again some day. Got to be getting along now."

He hurried away before Slattery could remonstrate. A sense of depression, which he could not shake off, followed him. His visit here had started so auspiciously, had seemed so promising—— Would it always be like this, he wondered? Would his past insist on meeting him at street corners, even here—especially here?

At the third-rate hotel where he had made his home since coming to town, he ascended dim stairs to his fourth-floor front room. He knew that he had left Slattery in a suspicious frame of mind; that mattered little. The important thing was that Slattery—even if he had noticed the scrutiny of the restaurant, which was not at all certain—could have no real idea of Reed's purpose. That watching of the window would not occur again, in case the man looked for it to satisfy his curiosity. To-morrow, for that matter, Reed would be gone—back West, to wind up his affairs there. Before he returned, Silk Slattery would have left town. There was really nothing to worry about. Perhaps, though, it might be as well to grow some sort of beard as a disguise, before returning. The chances were against his ever seeing Slattery again; but there were others.

In a little while he would start packing, to be ready to get away the following day. He had few belongings in the room. Prominent among those few was a faded framed photograph standing upon the bureau top. His eyes lighted as they strayed toward it. It was an old-fashioned "cabinet" photograph of a woman and a child. The child was a little shaver of four or

thereabouts, showing the kilts and the long, silky ringlets, which in those dim days were the proper fashion for tots. The picture had been his stay and his solace during hard, terrible years when he had doubted his very right to dote upon it.

Yet surely, he argued now, the wife who had died while he was in prison, who had died not knowing where he was, nor why he had disappeared—she would understand and forgive. She would know why he had never resumed the name rightfully his; why he had left his little orphaned son in the care of strangers, and later sent him to boarding school and college in ignorance of the fact that his father was living, and of the source of the money which paid his way.

That was not what Robert Reed, repentant and fresh from prison, had planned—far from it! To separate himself for years by an impassable gulf from the boy who was all that was left on earth for him to love? No one but himself knew how hard he had tried to establish himself in an honest livelihood. The specter of his prison past had made an outcast of him, against his will. No one else could know how the iron had entered his soul; how finally he had deliberately made the choice into which he had been forced.

It was far better that Robert Reed, the outcast, should prey upon a society which rejected him, than that little Paul should be brought up in poverty and scorn, perhaps to become an outcast, too, in his turn! The older man, with his life already seared, could at least see to it that Paul had every chance and every preparation for becoming a self-respecting and useful citizen—every chance except the home which his father could not make for him. So the father had retained the name of Robert Reed, the name whose adoption had made it possible to keep his wife in ignorance of his crime and his punishment. He had retained the character as well, the character of a resourceful criminal. Certain financial arrangements had been made. The remittances which Paul had regularly received were supposed to come from a trust fund.

Was it the easiest way? How could it be easy to deny himself the companionship, the very sight of the boy, for half a lifetime! Why, he had not even dared to possess himself of pictures of the lad at the various stages of his growth. The single old photograph standing on the bureau had been his shrine and his reward throughout the years. That was why he had feasted his tired eyes on the group at the restaurant table. The group had included young Paul Ronald, tall, clean-cut, well-dressed, and assured—Paul Ronald, a young man of brilliant prospects in the profession which he had recently entered. He was a different Paul Ronald from the boy who might have been brought up in a slum by a jailbird father!

Yes, it was worth it; the man sighed happily, as he tucked the precious photograph into the suit case. The plan had succeeded, and the whole sordid business was over. Never again need he stifle his conscience and risk his freedom; no longer need he suffer the soul-starving separation.

There would be one more trip back West, to settle permanently certain odds and ends, chiefly money affairs, which he had left behind. Then he would return as Robert Ronald, Paul's father. The arrangements could, of course, be made by mail from here; but it was better to go back. From a distance he could prepare the way for his coming; could send a letter telling of his return alive from the Klondike or New Zealand or some other place. Perhaps, too, he had better raise a beard as a precaution against again being recognized. When he came, the old identity must be definitely and forever buried.

On this preliminary trip, he had learned, without disclosing himself, what he wanted to know. He had had knowledge before of Paul's marks in college and medical school, and had known that the young man was doing well. Now he knew definitely that Paul was established on a self-supporting basis, beyond the need of further remittances of money. He was not prosperous enough yet to support a father, perhaps. But Robert Reed was not counting on that. He could get some sort of a job here sufficient for his own slight needs. He would be vouched for here by his son, Paul, whose prominent connections in the city would make his word carry some weight.

Reed roused himself from his reverie, glanced at his watch, and took off his coat. He was stooping to unlace his shoes when hurried footsteps padded down the carpeted hall. An instant later a soft but peremptory tap sounded at his door.

He straightened up in dismayed wonder. Then he crossed, turned the bolt, and opened the door.

A man rushed into the room and swiftly closed the door, a man whom he did not recognize at first until the newcomer had faced about. Then Reed gasped out.

"Silk Slattery!"

"Easy on that!" warned Slattery, his eyes darting about the room to take in its details. "Better talk in whispers, if at all. I don't think any one seen me come in here; but——"

"How did you know this was my room?" demanded Reed.

"Easy! I followed you home earlier to-night—oh, just to kill a bit of time. And the way that you shook me, made me think there was something in the wind, too. After you came into the hotel, I saw the light come on in your window here, so I was pretty sure this was your room. Lucky I did find the right place, too!"

"Why? What's——"

"About a dozen cops after me, that's all," interrupted Slattery. "I stuck up a taxi with a couple of swell society janes on their way home from a big party. Sparklers! Say, they was walking jewelry stores! I got the stuff, too, right here." He reached a hand into his bulging side pocket and brought forth a handful of scintillating gems. "Only one of the frails, that I thought had fainted, rolled out of the cab and sneaked around a corner and began to yelp for the bulls before I hardly knew she was gone. Believe me, there was some chase! I bet I've run a couple of miles! Didn't you hear no shooting outside?"

"No," said Reed.

"Well, there was some, and there'll be more, too, if they get near me again!" said Slattery. "If them bulls were as good as they are willing at shooting, yours truly wouldn't be spilling all this to you now. What's the matter with this room for an all-night hideout, Bob?"

Reed drew back in dismay. "What've you got to drag me into this for, Silk? I wouldn't turn you up to the police for anything, and you know it; but I've got very special reasons for not wanting to get mixed up in anything now. I——"

"Who said anything about mixing you up?" demanded Slattery. "If I come into your room to hide, you can't help it, can you? If I was to be nailed here—which I won't be—I'd do the handsome thing by you, Bob. I'd swear that you didn't know nothing about it."

He stood by the window, pulled the edge of the shade slightly aside, and looked out. "What's that?" he demanded suddenly.

Reed, too, stood motionless, listening. There was a slamming of doors on the floor below—voices—yes, footsteps on this very floor!

"They've traced me to the building! They're searching it!" exclaimed Slat-

tery, with an oath. He pushed open the window and craned his neck out. "The devil! There's a man down at the foot of the fire escape, too! How about the closet, there?"

A peremptory knocking at the door interrupted him. He stood motionless. "Snap out the light!" he whispered across to Reed. The latter obeyed mechanically, just as a pass-key sounded in the lock.

The door swung open, admitting a shaft of light from the hall. Reed felt the rush of air as Silk Slattery dashed past him. The hold-up man collided in the half-light with some one who was just stepping into the room, and they fell in a scrambling heap together. The next instant, other figures appeared, blocking the doorway; both the prostrate men opened fire, and Robert Reed crumpled to the floor.

In the hospital where a bored policeman sat beside his bed, Robert Reed had ample chance to speculate upon the turn which affairs had taken. The wound which had first rendered him unconscious was the less serious of the two —a mere furrow through the skin and flesh diagonally across his forehead. That was already patched up with dressings held in place by sticking plaster. It was the other—the bullet in his leg—which was giving the trouble.

More trouble than either was the penalty of having to lie here in mental struggle, without sufficient information to know the worst, or the best. The people who ministered to him—with a sufficient though impersonal tenderness —were uncommunicative. That of itself was a bad sign, as was the presence of the policeman. Reed knew that he was "under arrest." He had a vague recollection, too, of having had his finger tips pressed upon a pad of paper.

Rebellion against his fate surged within him. It was maddening to think that for years he had evaded a justice which, however unpleasant, he would have admitted as deserved. Now he was in the toils under circumstances where not the slightest actual blame was his!

A nurse bustled into the room, and smiled at him in a professional way. "Do you feel ready for the operation now? It's nothing to dread, really. You will need only a local anæsthetic. And you're going to be fortunate enough to have the best surgeon in the city—one of the best in the country—perform it. If you don't walk as well as ever after he's done with you——"

Two orderlies entered the room and prepared to move him. Somewhere outside, Reed heard the tinkle of a telephone. His leg twinged cruelly at some clumsy movement, and he gritted his teeth. If only this were the worst that was in store for him!

At the very door of the operating room the procession, of which he was the center, was halted. A white-clad young interne and the head nurse hurried up.

"Got some good news for you, friend!" said the interne. "It ought to help you bear up under the operation, so I'm not saving it. Police headquarters just phoned that they don't want you. The other man—Slattery—has made a full confession, exonerating you; and it tallies so well with the known facts that it's been accepted. He explained that you were perfectly innocent; that he only hid in your room —against your will—because he knew you. What with your record and all—which they got from looking up your finger prints—it looked bad for a while. But everything's right now, eh?" He smiled and passed on.

To Robert Reed the words were like a reprieve from a heavy sentence. Everything was not spoiled, then—necessarily. Silk Slattery had made good on his word; had done the "handsome thing." Not that it had cost any-

thing. Silk had been squarely caught, and had moreover escaped the bullets which had found an innocent victim. There'd be plenty of time, here in the hospital, recuperating from the operation, to decide just what changes of plan would be necessary.

He was in the operating room. The famous surgeon, white-robed and businesslike, stood beside him. Near at hand were two nurses, one in charge of the instruments and the other of the anæsthetics. But it was not the sight of these that brought new dread to the heart of Robert Reed.

For the first time he noted that tiers of seats rose from the center of the room to its sides. These seats were occupied by earnest-faced men who leaned forward eagerly, just like "first-nighters" at a theater always do. It was a clinic!

The nurse, at a nod from the doctor, drew near. She placed a gently remonstrating hand on Reed's forehead as he raised his head. But he had seen enough.

In the very front row, intently watching, was one earnest young face that the patient recognized—the face of Doctor Paul Ronald! Paul must, of course, know how he came to be there; must know that he was a criminal with a record out West. And Paul would forever be able to recognize the scar that would mark his forehead for all time, the scar which no disguise could erase!

Not furtive but apologetic, Robert Reed called a month later at the office of Doctor Paul Ronald. The doctor scowled importantly, as is the way with young professional men.

"What can I do for you, my man?" he inquired.

"I want a job," said Reed hesitantly and pleadingly.

"My dear sir, you've come to the wrong place!" said the doctor. "I'm not an employment agency, you know."

"No. But you don't get what I mean. I understand that you sleep in the room, back of your office here, and take your meals outside in restaurants. I could keep the place tidy, do any work you might have, answer the telephone, even get you your meals in here. I could drive your car——"

"Haven't got one," interrupted Paul Ronald. "By the way, aren't you the man who was operated on over at the hospital a few weeks ago? Splintered bone or something?"

"Yes." Reed was prepared for the recognition, so it did not startle him. "Oh, I know I haven't amounted to much. But—I'd like to go straight. I could be useful in so many ways, and I don't want much in the way of wages, and——"

Doctor Ronald rubbed his chin. "Sort of a 'Man Friday,' eh? It doesn't seem a bad idea, at that. And I guess I could trust you, too. I really believe that you do mean to go straight."

"Oh, you can! I do!" exclaimed the older man incoherently. "It's just the chance I've been looking for! If you searched and advertised for a year, you couldn't find a better servant——"

That was it—a servant. Instead of coming to Paul as his prodigal father, he was coming as a servant. But he could be near him, watch over him, rejoice in his growing success; perhaps, in some slight measure, even help in that success. It was not at all the sort of thing that he had planned during the years that he had worshiped the picture of a woman and a child—and lived through deeds that would have shamed them!

But as he stood, tremulous at the success which his newer plan had met, Robert Reed knew that this was a reward and not a punishment—a reward greater than he had deserved.

NOT SO EASY

By Irene Steiner

WEARILY "Kayo" Jenson slouched over to the park bench, gazed at it thoughtfully for a moment and sat down. Really no need to be in a hurry, he told himself as he pulled the collar of his threadbare overcoat closer around his throat to keep out the wind that was nipping the last leaves off the trees in the square. Committing suicide wasn't like catching a train or keeping a date. It was still early in the day, and he could do it just as well tonight as now. So there was no reason why he shouldn't rest a while before trying again.

If any one had tried to tell Kayo a week ago that killing one's self wasn't nearly as easy as it sounded, he probably would have replied with a skeptical snicker. But that was before he had any real experience. Less than a half hour ago he had stepped off the curb into the path of a speeding automobile. The least he had expected was to be tossed about a hundred feet, straight into eternity. But the foolish driver had been so anxious to avoid giving Kayo the necessary boost into Heaven that he'd wrecked his car against a telephone post.

And an hour before that he had jumped in front of a trolley car, only to have the motorman jam on the brakes and jolt to a stop six inches from his shins. A dozen persons inside had bumped their heads as a consequence, and the motorman had climbed out and said a lot of unprintable things to Kayo. Really, it appeared that the whole town would be bruised up if he kept on trying to kill himself. There wouldn't be nearly enough liniment to go around.

Stretching out his legs, Kayo leaned his head against the iron back of the bench and scowled at the gray sky. He was miserably tired of it all: tired of "knocking around," of working at odd jobs for a living, of going hungry when the odd jobs were scarce, of slipping, slipping farther and farther into sordidness. Why his life had gone awry he couldn't have told. But neither did he care. Kayo knew only that he was a beaten man, that he had been one for four years. In that time a slow lethargy

had crept over him. The spring had gone out of his step, the snap and sting out of his punch. Before, he had been a promising contender for the heavyweight crown.

It all dated from that memorable night four years ago when, brimful of confidence, he had gone into the ring against "Slug" Harris, one of the three men left for him to conquer before he might trade blows with the champion. He had climbed through the ropes with an aggressive sneer, and at the end of the third round they had carried him out unconscious, his nose broken, a deep scar across his forehead, and his lips torn and swollen. For a time they hadn't thought he would live, but he had. And two months later, still weak and pale, he had sat in the same auditorium and saw Slug Harris beat a man to death. A telltale movement, as Slug had returned to his corner, had aroused Kayo's suspicions. He had slipped up to the ring to investigate, and he had discovered that Slug had fought with a chunk of lead in his glove. Slug had been arrested, tried and sent to prison for manslaughter. For all Kayo knew, he was still there. He was no more concerned about it than he was over Slug's threats of vengeance, muttered after the jury had listened to Kayo's testimony.

But that was all over now, and Kayo didn't like to think about it. There had been a few fights afterward, but the indelible memory of that terrible beating at the hands of Slug Harris had changed Kayo from an aggressive to a cautious fighter. He "covered" more frequently than he attacked. And he invariably lost. Eventually he found it difficult to get engagements. After a while he quit the ring entirely. For the past two years he had been drifting—an odd-job man. The gloomy frown of the Dane in him had pulled down the corners of his mouth until now a smile would have seemed almost grotesque on his face. He was tired of living—struggling. He wanted to die. But it seemed as if he was going to have a hard time doing it.

He could go into a tall building, Kayo told himself, and take the elevator to the top floor, then climb to the roof and jump off. But he had always had a horror of falling. He'd probably get up there and lose his nerve. If he only had a revolver, he could shoot himself. Another "but." He didn't even know anybody who would lend one to him. About the only thing left to do was to take poison. That, it seemed, would be the most convenient way. Buy a bottle of something powerful and gulp it down. A few minutes and everything would be over. Fine! He started to get up. And then he sank back again. No. That wouldn't work either. Drug stores didn't sell poison over the counter to strangers as freely as they did toothbrushes. He'd have to have a doctor's prescription. And where in the devil could he get one?

Suddenly an inspiration came to him. An expression as near to enthusiasm as one could expect in the case of a man contemplating suicide spread over his face. He had it! Metal polish. That would do the trick. It was deadly poison. And he knew where he could get some. Mike, the porter down at Tony's saloon, always had a can of it around. He often had seen him using it to shine up the bar rail and the fixtures. And for a moderate tip Mike would give him a small bottle, he felt sure. He'd take it up to his room and drink it there. Like to see any one stop him this time!

Trudging across the square, Kayo entered a street of dilapidated houses, turned a corner, walked several blocks and finally arrived at an alley. He knocked three times on a door, then three times more. It was opened by Tony himself, a portly, bald-headed individual with a phenomenally red face

and a drooping gray mustache. He nodded solemnly and stood aside for Kayo to enter. But as he pushed shut the door he took hold of his coat lapel and pulled him into the corner.

"Listen, Kayo," he whispered. "Probably you better not hang around here to-day. It mightn't be so healthy."

"Why, what's up?" Kayo asked.

"Well, Slug Harris was around just a while back. He came out of prison yesterday and he was inquirin' fer you. It didn't take half a guess to see that he's lookin' fer trouble. You better lay low a while."

Kayo shrugged his shoulders dismally.

"Whatda think I care," he answered. To himself he was thinking that he rather hoped Slug was looking for trouble. If Slug meant to keep his promise to bump him off, all the better. It would save him the trouble of doing it himself. But the speak-easy owner thought Kayo was merely indulging in a bit of bravado.

"All right, be foolish if you want to," he said. "But just remember that I warned you." He wiped clean the top of a table as Kayo slouched down into a chair behind it. "What'll you have, soda pop, root beer or dish water?"

"What's the alcoholic content of the dish water?" Kayo asked.

"Not so good. But I got some nice fresh gin."

"All right. Bring me a slug of it," Kayo mumbled. "By the way," he continued as Tony started away, "did Slug say whether he'd be back here?"

"No. He didn't. But I imagine he's gonna." Tony went back of the bar and returned with a glass of synthetic gin. As he set it on the table, he suddenly dropped into the chair opposite Kayo.

"Say, I got some good news fer you, too." He leaned forward eagerly. "Pat Sullivan was in last night. You know, he's runnin a fightin' stable uptown now. And he asked me to tell you to come up and see him. He's needin' some sparrin' partners fer a couple huskies he's trainin'. Looks like a good chance fer ya to get back into the scrappin' game, Kayo."

But Kayo was unresponsive. The dismal frown only deepened on his face.

"I ain't looking fer a job," he answered. "Besides, I'm through fighting."

"Through fighting!" Tony emphasized the sentence with a sneering laugh. "Why, boy, if you only half wanted to you could still knock some of these kids they're puttin' up now fer a row of gas tanks."

"Maybe," Kayo answered listlessly. "But I don't want to."

"Ya. That's just the trouble with you, Kayo. You've lost yer spunk," Tony retorted impatiently. "Somebody ought to give you a coupla good, stiff kicks and wake you up. That's what ya need. I'm tellin' ya."

Tony arose and stalked back of the bar, mumbling to himself as he went.

As for Kayo, he only slumped farther down into his chair and decided to stick around in the hope that Slug would return. But time dragged along and he did not arrive. Kayo finally hailed the porter and gave him a quarter for a small bottle of metal polish "to shine up some things." He slipped it into his overcoat pocket and remained another hour, in the vain hope that Slug would return and keep his promise to kill him. But Slug didn't, and after a while Kayo left.

He took his time climbing the three steep flights of stairs to his room in the ramshackle boarding house that he had called home for the past two dreary years. There was no need to spend his breath hurrying, he told himself again. Pushing open the door, he snapped on the light and tossed his overcoat across the bed. The room looked unusually dismal, with its brass bedstead and scarred washstand and table. Not at

all a pleasant place to die. But it had to do. Taking a glass from the drawer of the washstand, he set it on the table and poured the metal polish into it. White, soapy-looking stuff it was. Probably tasted terrible, he thought, as he sat down in a chair and curled his fingers around the glass. But what did that matter! One quick gulp now, and everything would be over. Glad of it, too.

He lifted the glass toward his lips and closed his eyes. But as it touched his mouth a door creaked loudly and a heavy step sounded on the floor in the room. Kayo looked up and saw Slug Harris coming toward him from the closet.

"Well, I gotcha!" Slug exclaimed as he strode to the side of the table.

Kayo surveyed him. He was much the same Slug who had gone off to prison four years ago. The same heavy brute face and immense shoulders; only there was a deadly gleam in his eyes now, and his yellow teeth showed through a tense snarl. His left hand prodded the table with a short, ugly-looking knife.

"Told you I'd get you," he muttered. "You poor fish! Thought you could squeal on me and get away with it, didn't ya? Well I'm here to show ya that ya can't."

Kayo stared up at him, stupidly.

"How'd you get in here?" he asked, setting the glass back on the table.

"How'd I get in?" Slug repeated, leering. "Easy. Found a *friend* of yours who told me the address. Hid in the closet to give you this little surprise party when you came." He jabbed the table impatiently with the knife. "But I'm not wastin' any more time answering foolish questions. Get ready to meet your Maker, 'cause I'm gonna act quick."

He raised the knife. But Kayo only shrugged his shoulders listlessly.

"Well, go ahead," he answered. "Stick me. But get it over with. I'm really just as much in a hurry as you are."

A puzzled frown mingled with the malice in Slug's drawn face.

"What d'ya mean, yer in a hurry?" he asked.

"Just that," Kayo answered. "This is the third time to-day that I've tried to kill myself. And you're the third egg who's butted in just as I was ready." He picked up the glass. "I'm good and sick of it, too. If a guy wants to kill himself, he ought to be left alone to do it. Either use yer knife or get out of here." He turned his face and lifted the glass.

But as Kayo opened his mouth to gulp down the milky poison, Slug, dropping the knife, suddenly reached out and wrenched the glass away from him. Half of its contents spattered over Kayo's shirt.

"Gimme that," Slug said furiously. "Don't go tryin' any monkey business on me. If there's any killin' to be done, I'm doin' it."

Kayo saw him lift the glass to hurl it to the floor. There was still enough poison in it to do the trick for him. But in a moment it would all be gone. Impulsively he sprang up to save it. His hand shot out and grabbed the glass away from Slug. Leaping back, he again lifted it to his lips. But Slug was springing at him. Realizing that the glass would be knocked from his hand before he would have time to drain it, he hastily set it on the table and lifted his other arm to ward off Slug's blow. The impact sent him crashing against the wall. Before he could recover, Slug's other fist had collided with his head. The sharp pain brought an impulsive snarl of rage from his lips. He leaped aside and vengefully planted a blow on Slug's jaw.

In another moment they were in the center of the room, lashing at each other, dodging, side-stepping, clinching

madly. Kayo, who a short time before had been looking at life as a gray, drab, sordid panorama, was now seeing red. His eyes blazed with anger as he deftly dodged one of Slug's sledge-hammer blows and came back with a sharp jolt that made his opponent gasp. They indulged in a brief rapid-fire give and take. Then Kayo deftly stepped inside of one of Slug's wild left-handed swings, dropped his right arm at just the right moment and clamped Slug's wrist against his side. Before his adversary could break loose he had driven two short, crashing blows against his jaw.

It was an old trick of his, and Kayo felt a quick thrill of pleasure over its success. The next instant he remembered another and tried it. He twisted craftily and let a blow glance off his head. It didn't hurt, but he pretended he was dazed and, dropping his guard, sagged toward the floor. As Slug closed in to deliver the finishing blow, he ducked under it and, before his opponent could recover his poise, sprang upward, adding to his own strength the whole force of the leap. His fist, striking Slug full on the jaw, sent him reeling across the room.

With a snarl of triumph, Kayo followed him. He dealt blows with the power and rapidity of a trip-hammer. Slug sagged under them. He tried to cover his face with his arms, swayed for a moment, then crashed to the floor. As Kayo half-blind with fury, stooped over him to finish the job, Slug suddenly cried out for mercy.

"I got enough!" he pleaded in a hoarse voice. "I got enough, Kayo! Let up, will ya?"

"You have, eh?" Kayo asked. "Come in here to knife a guy, and then when you get the worst of it ya beg fer mercy. I'll show ya!"

But Slug, cringing on the floor, continued to plead.

"I wasn't gonna kill ya," he moaned. "I was just gonna scare ya and beat ya up. Honest, Kayo."

"Well, why didn't ya beat me up then?" Kayo, his fury subsiding gradually, stepped back and glared down at his opponent.

"Cause I couldn't," Slug admitted reluctantly. "Bit off more than I could chew, I guess."

Kayo surveyed him thoughtfully. He was silent for several moments.

"What ya been doin' in prison, Slug?" he asked finally.

"Breakin' rock."

"Hard as nails, eh?"

"Thought I was," Slug admitted.

"And ya let me beat ya up?" Kayo's question contained a gloating note. "Guess I ain't so bad, after all." He squared his shoulders triumphantly and glanced around the room. As he did, his eyes fastened on the glass of metal polish on the table. He stared at it for a moment with a puzzled frown. Then, as the memory of what he had obtained it for came back to him, he started. But the next instant his lips spread in a faint grin.

"You busted in on me just as I was gonna kill myself, Slug," he said.

"Huh?" Slug answered, sitting up. "I thought ya was stringin' me." But Kayo, crossing over to the bed and pulling on his hat and overcoat, shook his head.

"No," he replied. "I wasn't stringin' you. I was just stringin' myself. Come on out of here. I'm goin' over to Pat Sullivan's fightin' stable. Understand he's offerin' me a job.

Headquarters Chat

ONE of the features in next week's issue will be an article written by Lewis E. Lawes, expressly for DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE. Mr. Lawes is warden of Sing Sing Prison, situated at Ossining, on the Hudson River, in New York State. Sing Sing Prison is perhaps the best-known institution for the incarceration of convicted criminals in the United States, if not in the world.

Warden Lawes' article deals with capital punishment, a subject which, for years, has received much attention, but at the present time is more in the public mind and more widely discussed than ever before.

There are few, if any, who are better qualified to express opinions on capital punishment than Warden Lawes. Thus, his article in next week's issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE is one of tremendous interest, and one that is most likely to be of epoch-making importance.

It is not often, as you know, that we urge you here to read any particular story or article, but we do urge you here in this week's issue to be sure to read in the issue of DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, dated March 27th, and on the stands next Tuesday, "Why I Changed My Mind," by Lewis E. Lawes, Warden of Sing Sing Prison.

While we are on the subject of next week's issue, may we call your attention to some of those who will contribute stories? Among them will be such old favorites as Oscar Schisgall, John Jay Chichester, Herman Landon, Roy W. Hinds, Ruth Aughiltree, R. M. Bemis, and Edward H. Smith.

Here are some expressions from the audience:

"DEAR EDITOR: I am holding a copy of the DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE which I just received from my news dealer, and I am taking this opportunity to write to you. I want to tell you that you have the best magazine for the money. I have been a reader of your magazine for the last eight years, and I have certainly enjoyed every issue. I hope that you will continue your good work. I like your Mr. Chang stories very much, also 'Thubway Tham,' 'Simon Trapp,' 'Big-nose Charley' 'Mother Hansen,' and the rest. Why don't you give us some more of Doctor Bentiron by E. M. Poate?

"JACOB IQUATIN.

"Philadelphia, Pennsylvania."

"DEAR EDITOR: All of your authors produce very interesting stories, invariably written with care. Literature of this style will serve as a mental shower bath to any one, irrespective of his station in life. The worker will tackle it after his daily toil with the same relish as a hungry farm hand will grab his pie; the professionl man will welcome it following a hard day in the office.

"This practice some of your readers have of picking out little flaws in a story is foolish. Since an error does not lessen the intrinsic value of an article, why hold it up to light? That is destructive criticism. Mr. Apple's stories are excellent. They are something new.

"ANNA AMBROSE.

"Pottsville, Pennsylvania."

MISSING

This department is conducted in both WESTERN STORY MAGAZINE and DETECTIVE STORY MAGAZINE, thus giving readers double service, is offered free of charge to our readers. Its purpose is to aid them in getting in touch with persons of whom they have lost track.

While it will be better to use your name in the notice, we will print your request "blind" if you prefer. In sending "blind" notices, you must, of course, give us your right name and address, so that we can forward promptly any letters that may come for you. We reserve the right to reject any notice that seems to us unsuitable.

If it can be avoided, please do not send us a "General Delivery" post-office address, for experience has proved that those persons who are not specific as to address often have mail that we send them returned to us marked "not found." It would be well, also, to notify us of any change in your address.

Now, readers, help those whose friends or relatives are missing, as you would like to be helped if you were in a similar position.

WARNING.—Do not forward money to any one who sends you a letter or telegram, asking for money "to get home," et cetera, until you are absolutely certain that the author of such telegram or letter is the person you are seeking.

MADOR or **MALICK, PETER.**—Was working in Attica, New York, in August, 1923. He is about nineteen years old. Believed to be in the vicinity of Buffalo, New York. Please write to J. M., care of this magazine.

FAGLEY, FRANK.—Last heard of in Bradford, Pennsylvania, about 1912. Tall, black hair, and about thirty-eight years old. Please address Bertha A. Hetrick, 381 East Central Avenue, El Dorado, Kansas.

GOSZMAN, JENNIE.—Was in Oxnard, California, in 1907, and later in San Francisco. I understand everything. Your loving daughter, Z. E. Thompson. 1177 Oak Street, San Francisco, California.

LE VERE, HORTENSE.—Please write to Z. E. Thompson, 1177 Oak Street, San Francisco, California.

SWEATT, CECIL J.—Twenty-one years of age, brown hair, gray eyes, medium height. Left Calvin, Oklahoma, prior to September, 1925, and went to St. Louis, Missouri, where he had a brother who was a watchmaker. Please write to Lois Hamilton, Box 874, Broken Bow, Oklahoma.

HOBBS, CHARLIE.—Please write to your old buddy, Robert Scott, 407 Northeast Street, Madison, Indiana.

WHETSTONE, CHARLES W.—Born in Missouri about forty-seven years ago. Medium height, dark eyes and hair. Last heard of in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1912. Have very good news for him. B. R. Meadows, 502 North Third Street, Okemah, Oklahoma.

BOHANON, ERNEST.—Left Corsicana, Texas, in August, 1925. Please communicate with G. L. B., care of this magazine.

ALLAN, MAME.—Formerly of Denver. Has a son named Carl. She has married again, and I do not know her new name. Please write to me. Kate Ashba, 1015 Summit, Kansas City, Missouri.

BLACKIE.—Please write to me at this address. Miss Lillian Hadden, Box 664, Bethel, Connecticut.

HAWSE, CLAYTON.—Age nineteen, medium height, brown hair and eyes. Last heard from at Yearington, Nevada. Please notify J. G. Hicks, Toppenish, Washington.

MORSE, DAVID.—Is seventy-nine or eighty years old. Has not been heard from for over forty years. His sister is anxious to have some news concerning him. Please write to Mrs. L. Vincent Lamar, Missouri.

REED, JACK W.—Of Oklahoma. Have important news. Have been unable to find you. Dora, care of this magazine.

BJORK, BYRON THORVALD.—Any one knowing his whereabouts is asked to communicate with his old pal, William Turovh, 112 East Seventh Street, St. Paul, Minnesota.

SOLBERG, ERNIE.—A printer by trade. Last heard from in El Paso, Texas, about March, 1925. Address Atwell Curtis, 4002 Colonial Avenue, Dallas, Texas.

RIGGS, CHARLIE W.—Last heard of in Des Moines, Iowa. His brother, who is at home, would like to get a letter from him. Larry E. Riggs, General Delivery, Bristol, Virginia.

THOMAS, Mrs. EMMA.—Please write to your mother, who is ill, and wants to hear from you. Mrs. Lillie Jasper, Box 314, La Salle, Illinois.

ROWZEE, CHARLIE G.—Small man, sandy hair, dimple in chin, about thirty-eight years old. Is probably employed as a fireman or brakeman on a railroad. Please write to one who still loves him. Mrs. Emma Nash, 220½ East Third Street, Davenport, Iowa.

ERWIN, EDWIN R.—Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his wife, Mrs. E. R. Erwin, 1482 Newton Street, N. W., Washington, D. C.

DERWACTOR, JOSEPH H.—Was a corporal and battery clerk in Battery A, 11th F. A., Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in 1922 to 1925. Please write to Miss Blanche Fisher, care of 76th F. A., Fort Russell, Wyoming.

TAYLOR, CHARLES LESLIE.—Last heard from five years ago when he was in Wayne, Alberta, Canada. He advertised for his sisters and a brother, through this magazine, several years ago. Please write to Mildred, care of this magazine.

LANE, RICHARD A.—Forty years of age. Last heard from at Hoisington, Kansas, in 1908. If any one knows anything about him, his mother would be more than grateful to hear from them. Address Mrs. A. C. Heman, 1938 South Spaulding Avenue, Chicago, Illinois.

PRYOR, ED.—Last heard of at Evansville, Indiana, in 1920. Please notify James R. Pryor, Company B, 11th Infantry, Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

O'BRIEN, P. T.—Please forgive me and return. I am sorry for what happened at 2002 Brandywine Street, April, 1925. W.

COURTNEY, CLARENCE HAYS.—Brown hair, blue eyes, medium complexion and height. Formerly lived at 82 Drummond Street, Montreal. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. N. M. Hunt, 22 Central Street, Springfield, Massachusetts.

HARPER, JOHN T.—Last heard of at Arkansas, October, 1921. About forty-five years old, tall, blue eyes, brown hair. His mother is anxious to hear from him, or any news concerning him. Address all communications to A. E. Harper, 304 N. Rice Street, Houston, Texas.

LEYSEN, C.—Born near Antwerp, Belgium. Blue eyes, dark hair, rather short. Last heard of at San Diego, California. Please advise his wife, Mrs. Ida Leysen, 3200 Oakland Avenue, Sacramento, California.

KIDD, ERNEST W.—Constantly waiting for your answer. Wanda and I still love you and want you back. Please write often. Mrs. Mabel Kidd, 191 Summer Street, Charleston, West Virginia.

F.—Write or come. D. H., care of this magazine.

NIVA, ISAAC A.—His real name is Harvey, although he may not know it. He is thirty-seven years old, has light-brown hair, blue eyes, and is about five feet five inches tall. Born in Finland. Left Calumet, Michigan, in 1905, for Chicago, to visit John Leonard. Please send any information to his mother, Mrs. Mary Niva, 123 Jay Street, Butte, Montana.

GRAY, ALBERT W.—About thirty years of age, dark-brown eyes and curly brown hair, olive complexion, medium height. Left his home in Bellows Falls, Vermont, about fifteen years ago to join the navy. His mother would be grateful for any news. Mrs. C. W. Gray, 4 Clover Street, Rutland, Vermont.

MILLER, KATHRYN C.—Or her children. Last heard from at Kalamazoo, Michigan. Please write to M. L. H., care of this magazine.

SPRAGUE, GEORGIE, or **GRACE STEWART**—of Montana, who knew Maud in Michigan, please write to M. L. H., care of this magazine.

THOMAS, "SHORTY."—Would like to hear from you. Charles A. Coyle, 529 S. W. 4th Street, Miami, Florida.

COHEN, ISADORE.—Please let us know where you are. We will not try to bring you back if you are satisfied. Mother is lonesome. Fannie Cohen, 40 Church Street, Gloversville, New York.

SHAY or **HONAS, JOHN.**—Age forty-four, medium height, dark hair and eyes. Has been missing since April, 1923. Last seen at a small town called Schenley, on the Allegheny River. Send any information to E. F. Hepler, 132 Longfellow Street, Vandergrift, Pennsylvania.

HIGGINS, GEORGE.—Fifteen years old, short, light hair and blue eyes. Please let us know where you are, as father and sister are worried about you. Wendell.

SMITS, FRED WILLIAM.—Any one knowing his whereabouts please notify Mrs. A. Smits, Route 6, Box 253, Santa Ana, California.

BEHRANT, HENRY.—Formerly of Kansas City, Kansas. Is about fifty-four years old. German descent. His sister would like to hear from him. Mrs. Emma Behrant, care of this magazine.

BOEY, BILL.—We received your letter in September. Money order and three letters sent to you at Vinton, Kansas, were returned. We want you with us. Julia Sprague, P. O. Box 263, Manville, Wyoming.

McFADDEN, LYDA TRUMPOWER.—Born in 1904 in State of Maryland. Educated at Hagerstown, Maryland. Will help finance you in your training. Father, P. O. Box 76, Evanston, Wyoming.

VAN DERMERE, THEODORE ROBERT.—About twenty-seven years of age. Last heard of in Portland, Oregon. Information received would be very much appreciated by friends. Please write to Miss Z. Spenadl, 78 Wentworth Street, Aldgate, London, E. 1, England.

SLVAN, HAZEL.—Last heard of at Blue Lake, California. Please write to Hattie Disbrow, Bangor, California.

MOON, CARL.—About sixty years of age, six feet tall, brown eyes. His brother Joe would like to hear from him. Address Mrs. John Disbrow, Bangor, Maine.

McMAKIN, HARRY C. or JACK.—Was in Hillsboro, Texas, in 1913. He is forty-four years old. His little finger of right hand missing. Any information will be appreciated by J. W. Makin, P. O. Box 202, Delavan, Illinois.

SPARKS, MARY.—Lived at New Bloomfield, Missouri, in 1923. Have not received an answer. Please write to me. Carl G. Johnson.

ELLIOTT, FELFARD LEE.—He is twenty-six years old, fair complexion, black hair and blue eyes. Any information will be appreciated by Mrs. Laura Elliott, Madera, Pennsylvania.

WELSOR, MABLE.—Moved to New York from Philipsburg, Pennsylvania, fifteen years ago. Please write to your sister, Mrs. Laura Elliott, Madera, Pennsylvania.

WEATHERBY, STAN.—Last heard from at Seattle, Washington. Any word will be appreciated by his folks. Address W. W., care of this magazine.

WALLACE, GREEN.—Last heard of at Yellowstone Park, about fifteen years ago. Any information will be appreciated by his son, Chester Jackson Wallace, Box 470, Sheridan, Wyoming.

FITZSIMMONS, ARTHUR H.—About forty-five years old. Formerly of Earl Park, Indiana. Last heard from at Hammond, Indiana. Robert V. Parker, 656 Knox Court, Denver, Colorado.

ZELLER, FRANK.—About twenty-five years of age. Left home in 1918. Last heard from in Montana and Oregon. Robert V. Parker, 656 Knox Court, Denver, Colorado.

FERRON, FRANK.—Left Cut Bank, Montana, about twelve years ago. Is about forty-five years old, has light hair and blue eyes. His son would like to locate him. Address Argle Ferron, Cut Bank, Montana.

WRIGHT, ED O.—Buried his wife, May, in August, 1900, at Omaha, Nebraska, and left a baby girl at the Mother Lee Home for adoption. Please communicate with Mrs. R. H. Marshall, 3299 South Broadway, Englewood, Colorado.

PHELPS, LILLIAN.—Lived with a family named Bannister, in Baltimore, Maryland. Any one knowing her whereabouts please write to Mac, care of this magazine.

AKROYD, HERBERT.—Left his wife in Denver, Colorado, on July 12, 1925. She is sick and friends are caring for her. Mrs. Herbert Akroyd, 2439 K Street, San Diego, California.

MOORE, JOHN JOSEPH and ELIZABETH.—Would be pleased to hear from any of the relatives of this family who are descendants of Scotland and Wales. Address J. L. Moore, Waterford, California.

POTTER, HARRY.—Last heard from at Lufkin, Wisconsin. Please write to your brother, who is ill. Norris C. Potter, 4004 Avenue B, Austin, Texas.

EDWARDS, EDWARD.—Last heard of at Colby, Kansas, about three years ago. Wanted to settle estate of his grandfather and mother. Believed to be in the mines in the West. Is fifty-one years old, six feet tall, black hair and blue eyes. Please notify his sister, Mrs. Jane Brown, 117½ North Avenue, Warren, Ohio.

HART, FRED G.—Important that I hear from you at once. Rosalind Jury, Battle Mountain, Nevada.

SYLVESTER, VIOLA.—Last heard of in Oklahoma City. Have news of importance. Please write to Friend, care of this magazine.

SWANSON, JOHN L.—Please write. There is something I want to ask you. M. S., 3340 Redman Avenue, Omaha, Nebraska.

MITCHEL, Miss BILLIE, or BESSIE DOLAN.—Last heard of in Lynchburg, Virginia, in 1924. Please address H. B., care of this magazine.

JENSEN, HANS.—Thirty-four years of age. Served with the First Engineers during the war. Please write to your mother, who is worried. Jens Jensen, Box 218, Peterson, Iowa.

McLAUGHLIN, PETER JOSEPH.—Last seen in 1921 at Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Age fifty-four years. Please write to your sister, Mary McLaughlin, 17 Beekman Place, New York City.

MELLOW, ERNEST.—Was in Atlanta, Georgia, three years ago. Please write to your sister, Lula Summers, Watonga, Oklahoma.

SUMMERS, WILLIE.—When last heard from he was in Atlanta, Georgia. Please write to your mother, Lula Summers, Watonga, Oklahoma.

JOHNSON, W. A.—Last heard from at Wilmington, Delaware. Twenty-four years of age, dark complexion, black hair. Mother and father are worried. Please send any information to C. C. Johnson, R. F. D. 1, Hebron, Maryland.

ELLSWORTH, JOHNNIE and SAM.—Brother and father. Johnnie would be about twenty-eight now. Was living in Panaka, Canada, about sixteen years ago. When I was five years old mother sent him to father. Am anxious to get some trace of my father or brother. Martha Ellsworth, Route 1, Central Point, Oregon.

LOVE, PETER.—Left Campbellton, N. B., September, 1922, for Niagara Falls. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to Mrs. P. L., care of this magazine.

COAPLY, Mrs. J.—From near Denver, Colorado, who befriended us, please write to me, as I lost your address. Catherine M. Gray, Coddington Road, Ithaca, New York.

BESSIE.—Please let me hear from you, as I will help you. Write to the same old address, Box 1291. J. L.

KLACE, FRANK A.—Please go to Syracuse at once, as Junior is sick in a hospital, and I have no money to go there. I have been sick and unable to work. For the babies' sake send me some money. Mildred, Box 53, Cape Cottage, Maine.

HUNTER, Mrs. CLEO.—I am all alone with Inez and Irene, and I want to hear from you. Have lived with only the girls for the last four years. Am lonesome and blue. Your sister, Mrs. Willie Mae Webster, Box 384, Coleman, Texas.

BROWNING, ROBERT.—Was adopted from an orphan's home in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1903, by a farmer living in Alabama. He has been told that his own father was a doctor, and would like to get some trace of his parents. Please send any information to J. B. S., care of this magazine.

STEWART, ALBERT, FRANCIS, and MYRTLE.—Albert was adopted by a Mr. Walter Johnson and taken to Des Moines, Iowa, about ten years ago. Myrtle was adopted by a Mrs. Ed Mackey, and taken to Arkansas City, Kansas. Any one knowing either of them please write to their brother, Arthur Edward Stewart, General Delivery, Timpson, Texas.

KLIDERLINE, Mrs. ADAM.—Formerly of Buffalo, New York. Her son is trying to locate her. Lewis Klideriine Newell, 207½ South Main Street, Elkhart, Indiana.

RINKER, Mrs. ALVIE.—Last seen at Electra, Texas, about two years ago. Please address Mrs. V. E. Pringle, Box 1191, Breckenridge, Texas.

MULVEY, "BARNEY."—Of Boston, and any former members of Troop I, 13th U. S. Cavalry, between 1901 and 1903, please correspond with Charles E. Skidmore, P. O. Box 395, West Tulsa, Oklahoma.

FRETAG or FRIETAG, WILLIAM.—Formerly in Motor Transport Corps No. 515 and No. 85, of Jersey City and Hoboken, New Jersey. That matter we were talking of in years gone by has been forgotten. I wish to resume our friendship. Soloman Herman, 691 De Kalb Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

JONES, TAYLOR.—Left Nortonville, Kentucky, about twelve years ago. Please write to an old friend. Clarence Wright, Box 24, Nortonville, Kentucky.

GRIZZIN, ESSIE.—Last heard of at Cape Girardeau, Missouri. Please write to an old friend. Evelyn I. Burress, 710 Bayne Street, McKeesport, Pennsylvania.

ADAMS, WILLIAM.—Formerly of Bath, Maine. Your mother waits to hear from you. Mrs. Margaret Adams, Brunswick, Maine.

TURNER, Mrs. LENA M.—When last heard of she was working for a doctor in Garden Grove, California. Am getting anxious to hear from you. Private George M. Turner, Company L, 17th Infantry, Fort Crook, Nebraska.

McCLURE, JOHN.—Formerly of Bangor, Ulster, Ireland. Left twenty-two years ago. Was in Ogdensburg, U. S. A., six years ago. Any information will be thankfully received by his mother. Mrs. McClure, 42 Cherryville Street, Belfast, Ulster, Ireland.

RAINAUD, WILLIAM.—Last seen in San Francisco, in March, 1923. I am planning a trip East in the near future. Would like to see you. John E. Webb, 409½ 8th Street, Hoquiam, Washington.

MARSHALL.—Write to this magazine, Missing Department, for a letter from Sis.

COYNE, AMBROSE F.—Last heard from in Brooklyn, New York. He is twenty-seven years old, has black hair and blue eyes, and is tattooed on both arms. Any one knowing him please notify his wife, Mrs. Ambrose F. Coyne, 218 Pluna Street, Vineland, New Jersey.

ADAMS, EARL.—Of Kansas City and Wichita, Kansas. Worked in Silver Lake, Oregon, in 1922. Please write to your pal, Fred Schallhamer, care of J. W. Sweeney's Camp, Brookings, Oregon.

M. W. T.—Please write home and let us know where you are, for mother's sake. T. T.

WAYNE, THEODORE E., Jr., alias **CHARLES E. STONEWALL.**—With the American Consul Service and Foreign Trade, at Athens, Greece, in April, 1922. Is about thirty years of age, nearly six feet, auburn hair. Please send any information to W., care of this magazine.

KIMES, MARSHALL A.—Seventeen years of age, short, weighs one hundred and five pounds, dark hair and eyes. Last known address at Astoria, Oregon. Please write to his father, who is worried over his absence. Ben Kimes, Sanders, Idaho.

N. W. E.—Please send me your address, as I would like to write to you. Tots.

SLATER or **RICE, THOMAS FRANCIS.**—Short, heavy set, brown eyes and dark hair and olive skin. Was in Butler County, Pennsylvania, in 1905. But for my husband, I am all alone in the world. Please write to your lonely, little sister. Mary Rice Nelson, care of Mountain States Telegraph Company, Berthoud, Colorado.

GROVES, LESLIE.—Last heard of in California. Formerly of Mackey, Idaho. Please write to M. P. Bodenhamer, East Kansas City, Missouri.

FRANCISCO, EDWARD W.—Last heard from at Benford, North Dakota, in August, 1925. Would like to know where you are. Sis, care of this magazine.

GRAY, JAMES F., JANE, or **ALICE McCLAIN.**—Formerly of Pittsburgh and La Grange, Illinois. They were left executors of a will. No trace has been found since 1896. Please address I. P. C., care of this magazine.

MUNDELL, JACOB.—Last heard of in Minneapolis, Minnesota, twenty-three years ago. Please send information to James Mundell, Box 65, Crosby, Minnesota.

SLEETER, CHARLES or **WALTER.**—Last heard of in Louisville, Kentucky. Was a locomotive engineer on a Southern railroad. Please write to L. G. S., care of this magazine.

COREY, LESTER.—Was in Minneapolis, Minnesota, several years ago. Please write to Claudia Harbour, Box 993, St. Cloud, Florida.

GRACE, FRANK.—Left Paytucket, Rhode Island, about twenty years ago. Was in Camden, New Jersey, at one time. Address John Grace, 116 Merchant Street, Fall River, Massachusetts.

JORDAN, LONE and **LENA.**—When last heard from, Lone was in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Lena had left Muskogee, Oklahoma, for Ranger, Texas. Iantha Jordan, Idabel, Oklahoma.

C. A. P.—Dear son, have written many times, but received no answer. We all love you and have faith in you. Please write to Marion U., 611 39th Avenue, Seattle, Washington. Mother.

BEE-PEE.—Received your cards a week after you left. Hope and pray you are well. Am trying to be happy. Bee-Bee.

W. J.—Come at once to Ma B. You are welcome at the same address. Let us hear from you again. B. B.

FREELAND, HARRY W.—Please write to dad. I am anxious to know where you are and help you if I can. J. E. Freeland, Route 1, Box 194, Glendale, Arizona.

RASSMASSUS, TRANCY.—Lived in Portland, Oregon, in 1910. News of him will be appreciated by Dick Rogers, Broadway and 14th Street, Flushing, New York.

OLIVER, WILLIAM G.—Mother just died and am anxious to communicate with him. His sister, Mrs. Jean M. Sherris, Little Prairie, Alta., Canada.

HENLEY, EDITH.—Formerly of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, or Centerville, Iowa. Would appreciate very much hearing from her in regard to a mutual friend. Mrs. Ada E. Sides, Golden City, Missouri.

HARTMAN, JAY.—Have important news. Please write to your sister Myra's daughter. Myra West, 25 North Main Street, Springfield, Massachusetts.

BYLAND, THOMAS C.—Of Mattoon, Illinois. Please send me your address, so that I can forward a paper belonging to you. Tommy.

LEE, Mrs. LIZZIE S., and **WALLACE M. DOWNES.**—Sister Alice would like to get in touch with you. Please notify Mrs. William H. Blair, care of Q. M. C. Det., Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

OSBON, RICHARD H.—Disappeared December 17, 1925, from Coldwater, Michigan, where he was a student at high school. Medium height, seventeen years of age, red hair, and brown eyes. His mother is very ill from constant worry over him. Mrs. George S. Osbon, 611 East Chicago Street, Sturgis, Michigan.

W. A. T.—Received your card. Have tried many times to get in touch with you. Please write to same address. Pearl.

SELBERT, ROSE and **ED.**—Any information as to their whereabouts will be greatly appreciated by Corporal Lester Selbert, A. Battalion 2, F. A., Fort Bragg, North Carolina.

H. I.—Please write and let me know how you are, daddy. Doris Catherine, care of this magazine.

HUNTER, R. R.—When last seen was night clerk at the Victoria Hotel, Chicago, Illinois. Please address Mrs. William H. Blair, care of Q. M. C. Det., Fort Sam Houston, Texas.

CORNETTE, DAISY E.—Everything is forgiven. Am with Daddy Billy. Please write to mother, care of this magazine.

CRAMER, Mr.—Last heard of in January, 1924. Please write to L. E. Jamison, Seward, Pennsylvania.

WHITE, LE ROY.—Last heard of at Joplin, Missouri. His father ran a shoe shop on Main Street, about 1911. Have news of interest for him. V. M., care of this magazine.

SCHMALTZ, EMIL.—Last heard of around Minnesota. Please write to Harry Strieck, Sanford, Manitoba, Canada.

MILLER, Mrs. AMY.—Last heard of in West Yellow Stone, en route to Salem, Oregon. Any information will be appreciated. Mrs. Tommie Kell, Scurry, Texas.

TEEHAN, J. J.—Was at State hospital, Pueblo, Colorado. Any information as to his whereabouts will be highly appreciated. Mac, care of this magazine.

BURTLE, Mrs. J. L.—Formerly of Coeur d'Alene, Idaho. Believed to be living at Yakima, Washington. Please communicate with Dorothy, care of this magazine.

ALMEDIA.—Cannot quite understand why you do not write. This suspense is hard. Ed, McMinnville, Oregon.

MITTIE, STANLEY.—Was about seven years of age when I brought him from Yuma, Arizona, to Dallas, Texas, fifteen years ago. I sent him back to Los Angeles, California, to his mother, Rose Mittie. Would be pleased to hear from Stanley. Mrs. Elmer Short, General Delivery, Wewoka, Oklahoma.

McGRATH, JACK.—Was in Akron, Ohio, in November, 1924. Your old friend, the painter, wants to hear from you. Charles Nissen, 511 Crouse Street, Akron, Ohio.

WIGGINS, EARL.—I want to hear from you at once. Your old friend, Charles Nissen, 511 Crouse Street, Akron, Ohio.

CHISHOLM, BROWN or **MONTGOMERY, ALICE** or **EDNA.**—Last seen in Philadelphia. Please write to Jess, formerly of U. S. S. "Vermont." Have news for you.

BELL, ISADORE.—Mother took her from her father at Greenup, Illinois, when a small child. Would be nearly thirty by now. Any information would be appreciated by her half sister and a heartbroken father. Address Mrs. Lum Estes, 134 Logan Avenue, Danville, Illinois.

HURFORD, CARL WEBB.—Formerly of Canton, Ohio. Married Emaline Platt. Please send information to Mrs. Margaret Hurford, 520 West 124th Street, Apartment 41, New York City.

FOLEY, THEODORE.—Left home in May, 1924. He is nineteen years of age, tall, has gray eyes, and light hair. Weighs about one hundred and thirty-five pounds. Please write to his sister, Ruth Foley, Box 91, Scio, Ohio.

WORTHEN, ELSIE.—Please write to me at once. Theodore Biemer, 83 Tyler Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

BLACK, TOM.—Lived in Cameron, Texas, in 1899. When last heard of was working for the Santa Fe Railroad. Any information will be gladly received. Lydia Doyle, 402 West Belknap Street, Fort Worth, Texas.

GRABHORN, IVAN WILLIAM.—Any one who worked with him in Lansing, during the summer of 1924, please write to Lansing, care of this magazine.

SHIPMATES.—Of the 9th Division, S. S. "Leviathan," during the World War. Please write to Chic Henderson, Union Oil Company of California, Elk Springs, Colorado.

JORDAN, CLAYTON "DOC."—Last heard from in North Dakota. Twenty-four years of age, light complexion, medium height, one finger missing on left hand. Write to mother.

BOLERJACK, MILTON.—Aged twenty. Last heard of at Indianapolis, Indiana. Any one knowing him please communicate with his old father, Joe S. Bolerjack, Cushing, Oklahoma.

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